

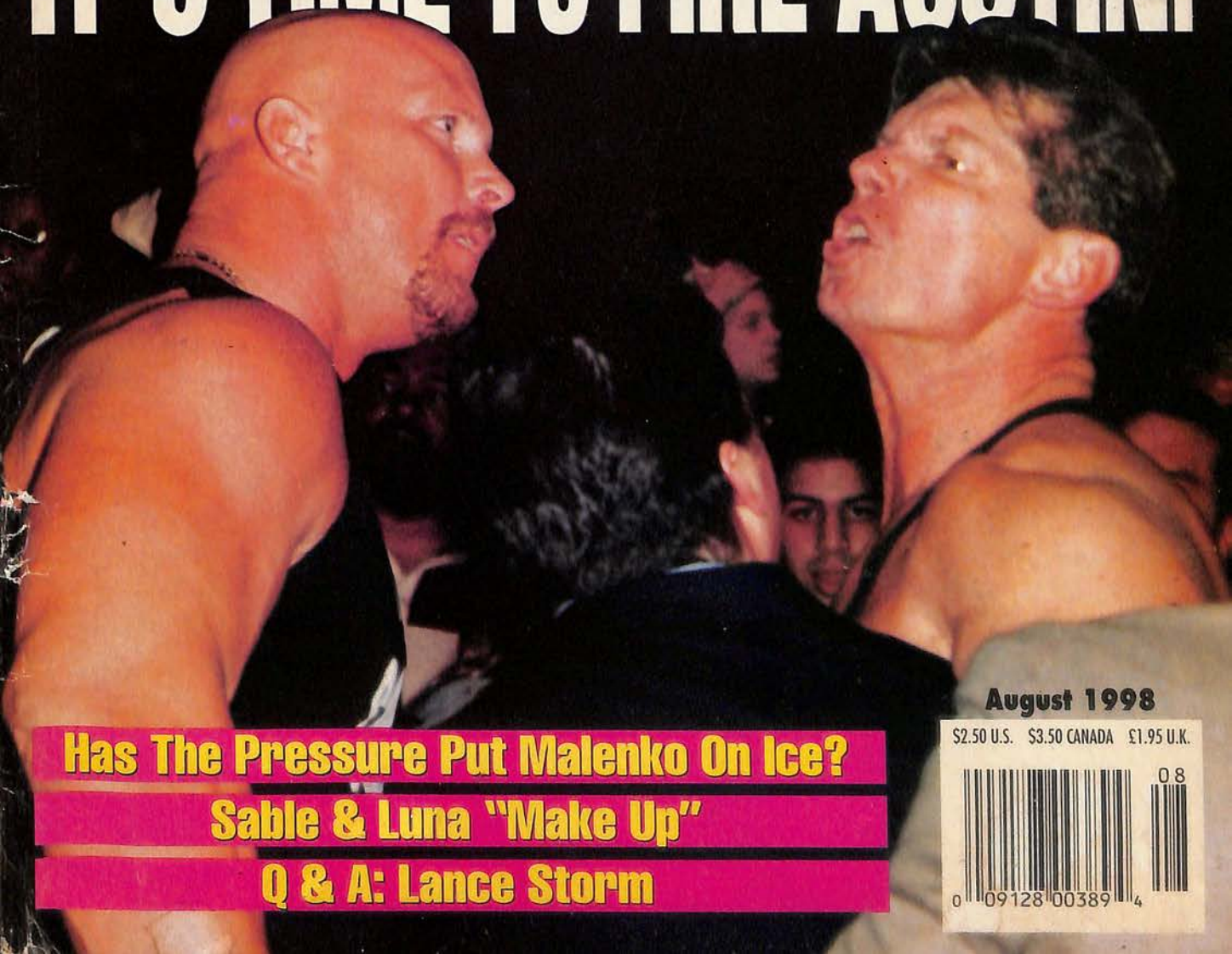
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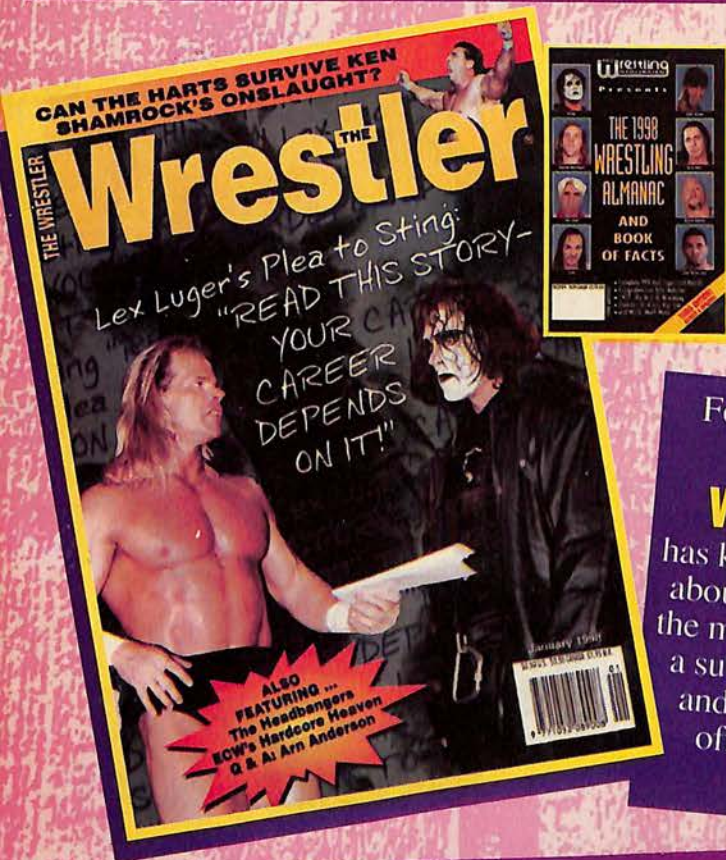
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Wrestler^{THE}

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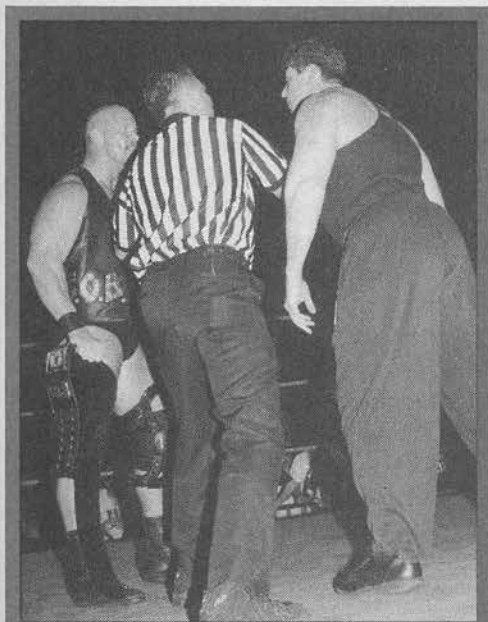


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Next issue on sale June 30, 1998

YOUR Letters

TYSON TALK

I wish professional wrestling (that means wrestlers, promoters, and fans) would stop deluding itself into thinking that it can control Mike Tyson ("Mike Tyson: Has He Entered Wrestling Hell?" May 1998).

I am neither a boxing fan nor a Mike Tyson fan, but the fact is that Tyson, who has done more damage with his own two hands than the entire WWF cast of wrestlers combined, could take out any wrestler, including Steve Austin or Shawn Michaels, any time he wanted to.

Tyson's inclusion in WrestleMania XIV didn't change my opinion of the WWF like it did for some, but please don't insult me by telling me that anyone stands a chance against him in the ring.

LLOYD TARVER
Washington, D.C.

Frank Krewda hit the nail on the head with his closing remarks in "Mike Tyson: Has He Entered Wrestling Hell?" (May 1998) when he said that Tyson's boxing ability means nothing inside a wrestling ring.

Of course, you can't overlook the pain Tyson is capable of inflicting on another human being, but I would have to make "Iron" Mike an underdog in a match against any wrestler, especially "Stone-Cold" Steve Austin.

As we have seen by following the wrestling careers of men like Steve McMichael, making the transition from another sport to professional wrestling is never an easy thing to pull off, regardless of how talented the athlete is.

Yes, Tyson is called the "Baddest Man On The Planet" by people in the WWF, but that doesn't say anything about his wrestling ability, which we must assume is suspect at best.

MARY PAIGE
Topeka, KS



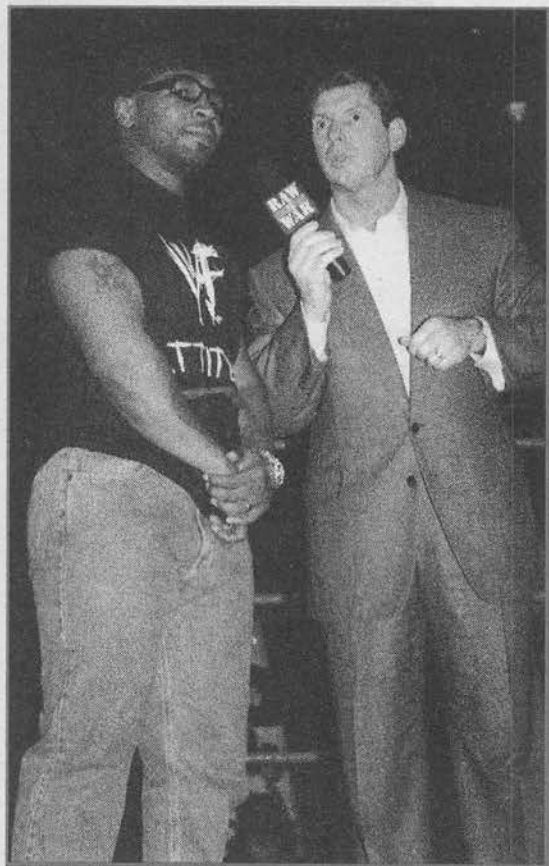
Little does he know it, but Rocky Maivia still has some fans left in the WWF. One of them is Wendy Whitlow, who says that recent criticism of "The Rock" is unfounded.

LAY OFF "THE ROCK"

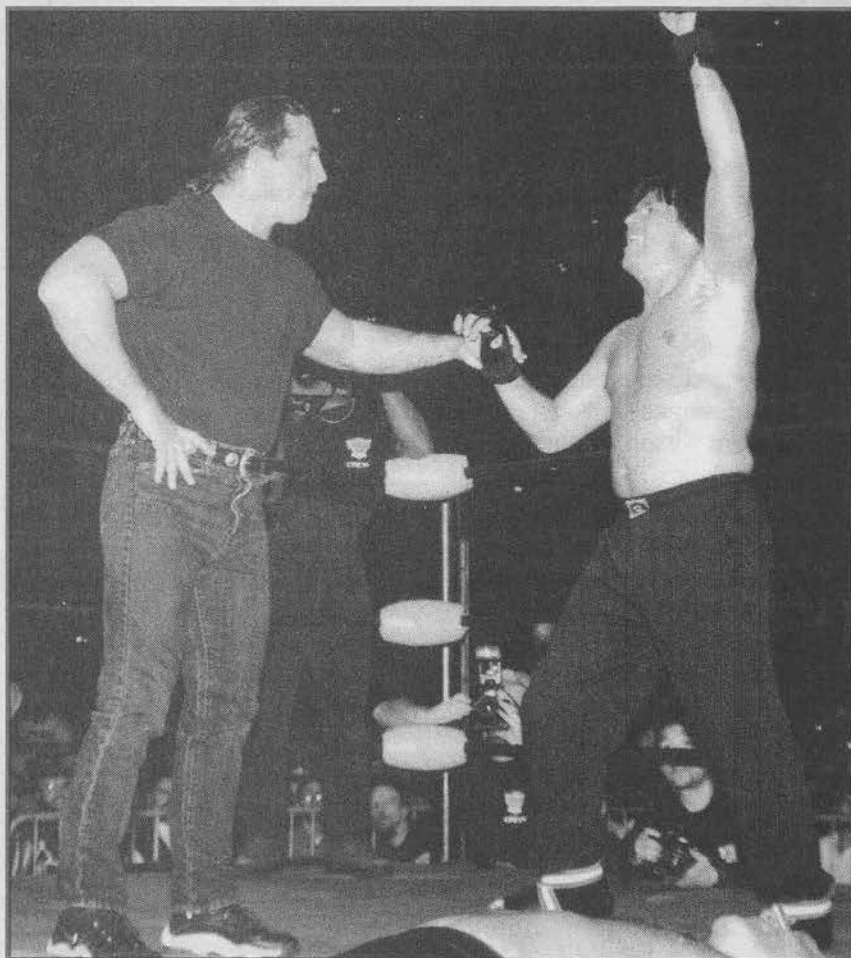
I think WWF fans are going a little too far with their criticisms of Rocky Maivia. He is a great wrestler and does not deserve the treatment he's been receiving lately.

I recently attended a WWF show just to see Rocky—he is one of the main reasons people come out to see the WWF—and was very disappointed when the fans started chanting, "Rocky sucks!"

He most certainly does not, because if he did, he wouldn't be the WWF Intercontinental champion—the best damn Intercontinental champion we've ever had. Of course, THE WRESTLER doesn't give him the proper respect he deserves, either. There are plenty of people who love "The Rock," but every month, I open my copy of THE WRESTLER to see pictures of Shawn Michaels, The Undertaker, and "Stone-Cold" Steve Austin. To



Would Vince McMahon like to see Mike Tyson wrestling in the WWF? Maybe. Several of our readers checked in with opinions on how they think Tyson would do against the WWF's elite.



Bret Hart took some heat for his actions during the Eric Bischoff-Larry Zbyszko match at Starrcade. Reader Ray Farris, however, was glad to see Bret kayo Bischoff.

my dismay, there is very little publicity given to Maivia. WWF fans need more than just The Undertaker and Shawn Michaels. I am sure that Rocky is not happy about this underexposure, but no one would ever know it.

WENDY WHITLOW
Morton, WA

THEY BLEW IT

It sure didn't take long to figure out once and for all who the greatest tag team in history really is ("Have The Steiners Finally Caught Up To The Road Warriors?" April 1998).

Scott Steiner's unexpected and disgraceful backstabbing of his older brother, Rick, completely shattered the duo. What's worse is that Scott joined the rest of the wannabes and has-beens in the NWO to betray Rick.

It is one thing for former all-time greats to sell their souls, but Scott singlehandedly put an end to the best team of all-time. Unbelievable. Until recently, the Warriors were always around to watch each other's backs, but even they had their problems for a while. Despite all that both teams have accomplished, neither should be called the all-time best anymore.

CARLOS BERMUDEZ
Hialeah, FL

THUMBS ... WHERE?

I have to disagree with your decision to give Bret Hart a "thumbs down" (May 1998) for his work as referee in both the Larry Zbyszko-Eric Bischoff and the Sting-Hulk Hogan matches at Starrcade. Okay, so maybe he had no right to restart the Hogan-Sting match, but what he

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Wrestler

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WHAT'S

Happëning

By Bill Apter

SHAWN MICHAELS appears to be out as the leader of **DeGeneration X**, with **Hunter Hearst Helmsley** taking over his spot. At least that's the way "Triple-H" sees things.

"Shawn Michaels was a great leader," said Helmsley. "But just because Shawn Michaels is out of the picture at this time does not mean DeGeneration X closes up shop and goes out of business. DX is bigger than Shawn Michaels, it's bigger than every one of us. However, the truth of the matter is that I was responsible for most of our success, and Shawn was responsible for our biggest faux pas, and that was bringing **Mike Tyson** into the fold.

"I specifically told him I did not trust Tyson. I specifically told him I did not want Tyson in our organization. I told him Tyson could cost us the World championship. But no matter what I said, Shawn refused to listen—and look what happened. Life will go on without Shawn. **Chyna** and I have brought **X-Pac** and **The New Age Outlaws** into the fold.

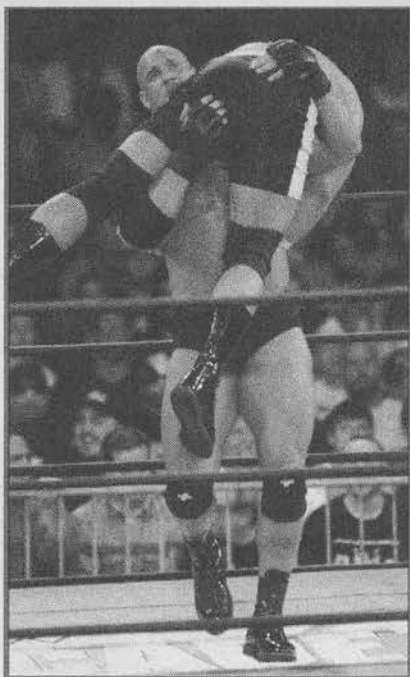
Hunter Hearst Helmsley and Chyna (below) are now running DeGeneration X, while Shawn Michaels (right), who's recovering from a back injury, is on the outside looking in. Michaels hasn't commented publicly on the situation.

And you'll notice I haven't asked for Shawn's approval!"

HBK refused comment when I called him at his home in San Antonio, but **Jose Lothario**, Mi-



chaels' mentor (they had a falling out when DX was formed, but have since mended their relationship) told me, "Shawn and I were watching Hunter on TV when he said that Shawn was responsible for all the problems. Shawn just gave me a disgusted look and said, 'I don't even want to think about wrestling.' He took the remote control, turned off the set, and left. I haven't heard from him since."



If Arn Anderson gets his way, Bill Goldberg could be part of a new version of **The Four Horsemen**. Arn's other top candidates are Ric Flair, Lex Luger, and Dean Malenko.

At press time, **Arn Anderson** was contemplating putting together another version of **The Four Horsemen**, with Arn taking on a managerial role.

"I'm getting very frustrated watching all the crap that the **New World Order** and **Raven's Flock** are dishing out," he told me. "I've got a list of 10 guys who I am interested in, and if I can put things together, you may see the new Horsemen in a few months."

Arn went on to list his top candidates: **Ric Flair** ("The Horsemen need the spirit of an original Horseman legend in their corner"), **Bill Goldberg** ("This man has a ton of raw talent, but what really impresses me is that he's ready to destroy anyone in his path. That's a big key when you're a Horseman"), **Lex Luger** ("Hell, he's been there before, and although we've had our differences through the years, we're on the same page now"), and **Dean Malenko** ("Dean is one of wrestling's best ring technicians and would give the Horsemen a whole new dynamic. That's if I can talk him into coming back to the business.

He's real sour on the sport right now, but with the proper commitment, he could make this Horsemen gang the best we've ever had").

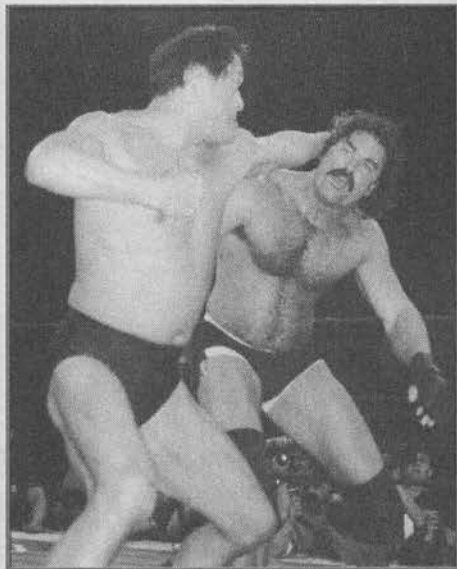
Japanese legend **Antonio Inoki** brought his 38-year career to an end on April 4, when he wrestled his final match in front of 70,000 fans at the Tokyo Dome. Inoki's opponent, former Ultimate Fighting Championship competitor **Don Frye**, dominated most of the match until Inoki locked him in his signature hold, the grand cobra twist, and forced him to submit.

"Many wrestlers' retirement matches are not against opponents who push them to the limit," Inoki said. "I did not want to leave our sport with the fans and the writers saying that about me. Mr. Don Frye impressed me with his performance, and there were moments in the match when I wondered if I would be able to win. I thank him for giving me the best he had." One of the highlights of the show came when **Muhammad Ali**, who fought Inoki to a draw in a boxer vs. wrestler match in 1976, hon-

ored Inoki by lighting a torch and handing it to Inoki as he made his way to the ring.

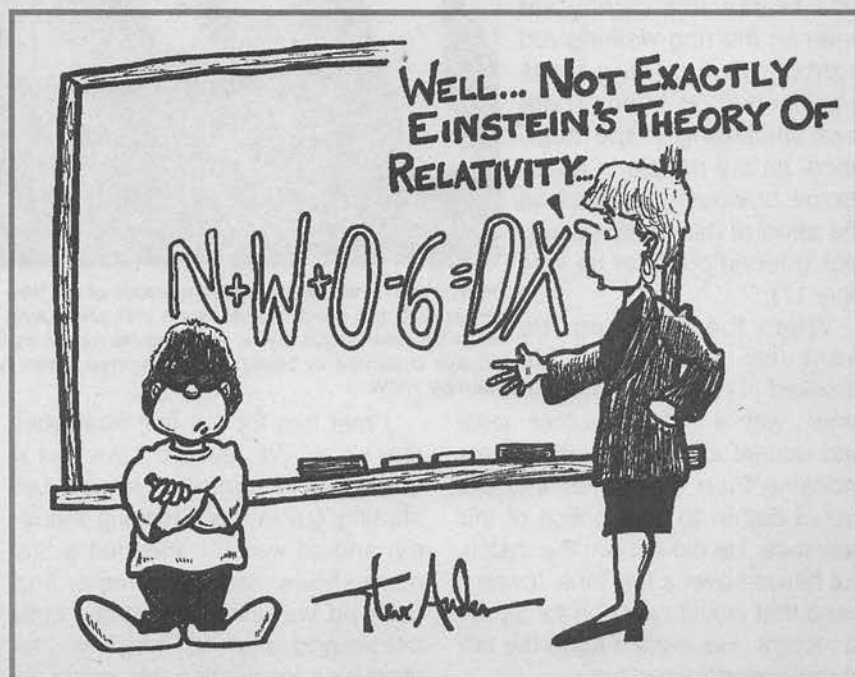
Inoki now plans to serve as an adviser to a new promotion, the Ultimate Fighting Arts Organization, which will be similar to the UFC in style.

(Continued on page 52)



Antonio Inoki went out a winner! He defeated former UFC star Don Frye in his final match, held April 4 in Tokyo. Though he is through with active competition, Inoki will remain busy.

Steve Anderson's View



NO Hölids Barred

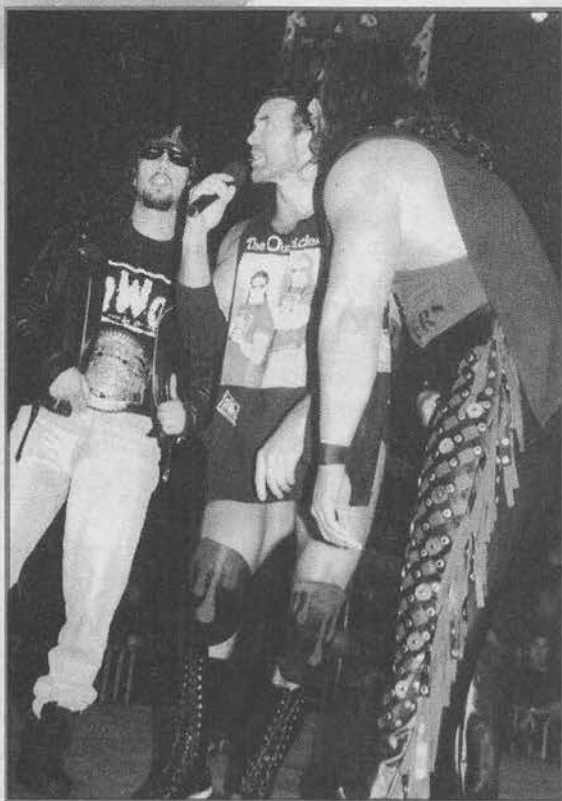
with Steve Anderson

HE WANTED TO be the talk of professional wrestling.

I remember when I first saw him, about eight years ago. It was a sweltering August day, and I was attending a Pro Wrestling America show. A ring had been set up in the parking lot of a shopping mall in the north part of Minneapolis.

The opening bout began. I won't even try to recall the name of his opponent, but I'll never forget how surprised I was to see this skinny kid entering the ring wearing red tights with lightning bolts emblazoned on them. There was snickering in the audience, as the people in attendance obviously questioned the skills of this lanky youngster (I found out later he was only 17).

When the bell rang, he went into his "zone." He shocked his opponent and the crowd with a combination of aerial and martial arts moves. Slowly the mocking tone dissipated and the crowd began to take notice of this new face. He did not win the match, but he won over a few fans. It was a trend that would continue for several months. He wanted to be the talk of professional wrestling.



Even when he was a prominent member of the New World Order with his good friends Scott Hall and Kevin Nash, Sean Waltman (a.k.a. Syxx) wasn't quite as hot as he had always dreamed of being. That changed when he was fired by WCW.

I met him for the first time after that show. We found out we had a great deal in common. He was just starting out in the wrestling industry, and so was I. I attended a few more shows over the summer and fall, and we talked frequently both before and after his matches. His story was fascinating. He came up

to Minnesota at age 16 to become a professional wrestler. He had just finished training with Boris Malenko and wanted to show his wares in the Midwest.

He wanted to be the talk of professional wrestling.

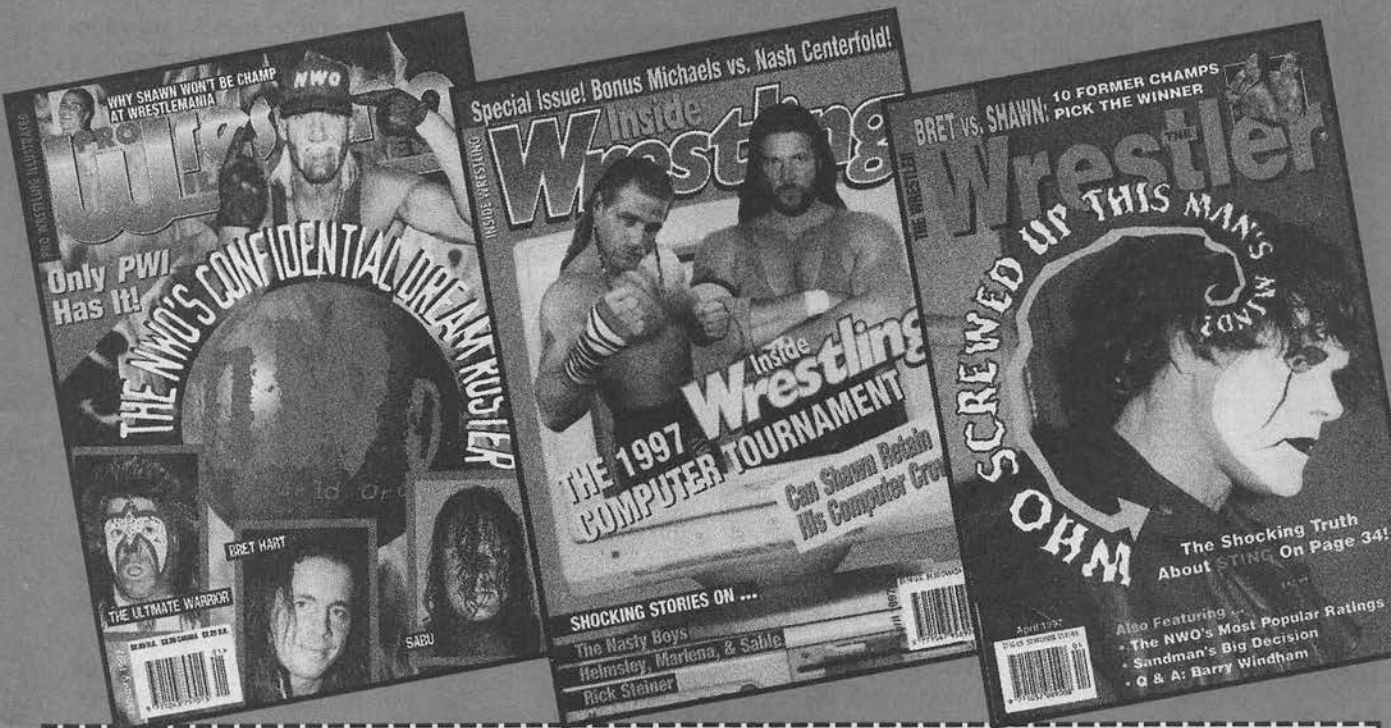
As the months went on, we struck up a friendship. We would often go out to dinner together after shows and talk wrestling on the telephone. I was impressed with his vast knowledge of the sport's history and his obsessive desire to excel in his chosen field. No matter how much he was earning for a match, he gave it his all in the ring. Whether he won or lost, he wanted everyone in the crowd to leave with his name on their lips. He wanted to be the talk of professional wrestling.

His first national exposure came down in Texas with the Global Wrestling Federation, where he captured the light heavyweight title. Promotions in Japan favoring the lithe high-flyers and risk-takers invited him overseas to compete. He was starting to gain the recognition that he longed for throughout his young career. But he was still not the talk of professional wrestling.

(Continued on page 54)

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By
Andy
Rodriguez

SABLE WASN'T SUPPOSED to out-class Luna at WrestleMania, but she did. Now Luna has to be asking herself, "What happened to me?"

What happened was that Luna hasn't faced that sort of determination in the ring in a long time. Most opponents are freaked out just by her appearance, let alone her formidable wrestling skills. She's had the edge for many years.

Sure, Sable didn't beat her one-on-one. It was a mixed tag bout pitting Sable and Mero against Luna and Goldust. However, they did receive their opportunities together in the ring, and Sable dominated Luna and pinned her after using Mero's favorite move, the "TKO."

It was an embarrassment to Luna. Sable isn't a trained wrestler. She's a fighter—she proved that—but she hasn't received the instruction or logged the ring time that Luna has. It was her first match, and Luna should have defeated her easily.

And she shouldn't have been so frightened of Sable. It almost didn't make any sense. Luna is a world-class maniac, but at WrestleMania, she was cowering. At some level, then, she is losing her intensity. Outwardly, she appears to be as tough as ever, but I can't help get the impression that inwardly, she is groping for some answers.

One answer might be this: There is not a decent women's wrestling division in the WWF. In fact, there is not a decent women's division anywhere in North America, but for Luna, all that matters is the World Wrestling Federation.

If she had some solid competition night after night, she wouldn't have to worry about losing her edge. There are plenty of women out there who could help her keep focused. And she's good enough to beat most of them. There's some more inspiration for her.

Instead, she challenges Sable to an evening gown match, and once again we

see mainstream women's wrestling equated with catfighting. Why did Luna do it? Probably because she was bored. She probably wasn't thinking about the consequences for the sport. She just wanted some action.

Although she has been getting plenty of excitement since she replaced Marlena in Goldust's corner, Goldust clearly relies on Luna to provide the interference that helps his win-loss record. It also would be hard to argue that the two of them don't belong together. One look is all you need.

Luna has spent most of her career playing a supporting role for various men. So maybe she isn't interested in a women's division. Maybe she just wants to look—and be—mean and nasty in the service of others.

If that's the case, it's a loss for the sport, because Luna indeed has the potential to be a great women's champion. And she wouldn't even have to lose the makeup. There's plenty of weirdness nowadays—even at the championship level.

She won't get that title belt around her waist, though, because the current state of affairs won't allow it. But she's not screaming for title bouts,

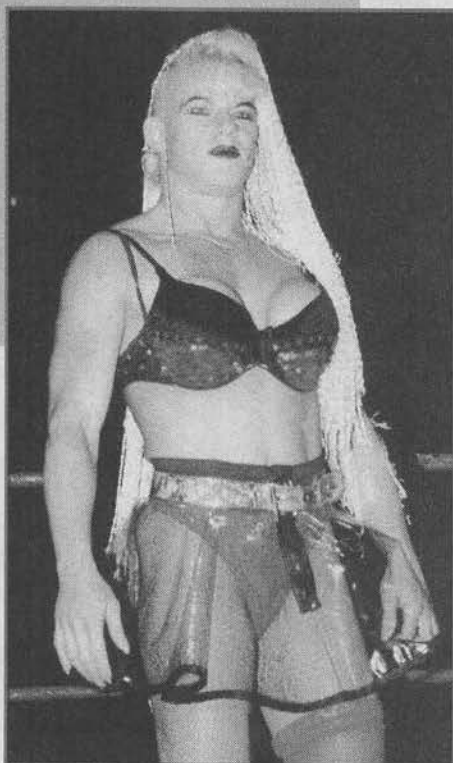
mainly because the hype over women's wrestling isn't built around serious competition. It's built around evening gown matches.

This column has turned into one of my periodic, "Oh, gee, why isn't there any women's wrestling?" rants, but it was meant to be a plea—and a warning—to Luna. She still has time to be remembered as a great wrestler, not just a great oddity.

If she wants an occasional catfight, okay, but if she truly wants to set herself a legacy, she'll have to plunge into serious wrestling competition.

Goldust can find somebody else to do his dirty work for him. Somebody who, as Gorilla Monsoon used to say, doesn't know a wristlock from a wristwatch.

There are better things out there for Luna. I hope she realizes that. □



There's still time for Luna

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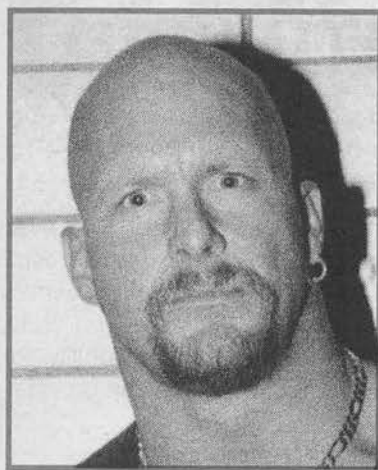
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T H U M B S Up



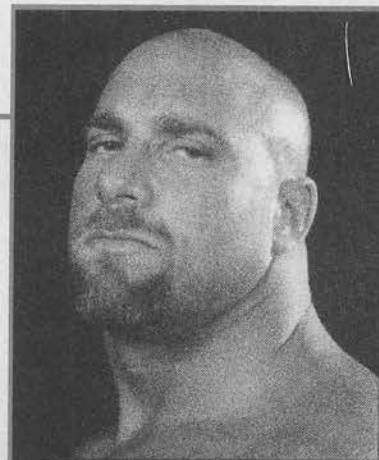
Thumbs Up to Steve Austin. While over in WCW, controversy rages over who is deserving of the World heavyweight title, no such debates are taking place in the WWF. Austin is the new WWF World champ, and he won his title fair and square by pinning Shawn Michaels at WrestleMania XIV. It was a spectacular performance by Austin, who took a lot of punishment and overcame an injured leg. In the end, Austin blocked Michaels' superkick, then scored with a "Stone-Cold stunner" and got the three-count ... which was made by DeGeneration X member Mike Tyson. No matter what WWF head Vince McMahon says, the WWF *does* have a worthy champion.

Thumbs Up to Sable. You never would have known that Marc Mero, Goldust, and Luna Vachon were the real wrestlers in the mixed tag team match at WrestleMania XIV, because Sable outperformed all of them. Although she was Mero's partner, Sable was basically wrestling on her own, because she couldn't expect much help from the egocentric Mero. Early in the match, she kneed Goldust in the groin, and later she performed a beautiful leg takedown on Vachon. The crowd roared when she clotheslined Luna over the top rope and covered Goldust for a pin attempt. Finally, she used Mero's "TKO" to finish off Vachon. Well done, Sable!

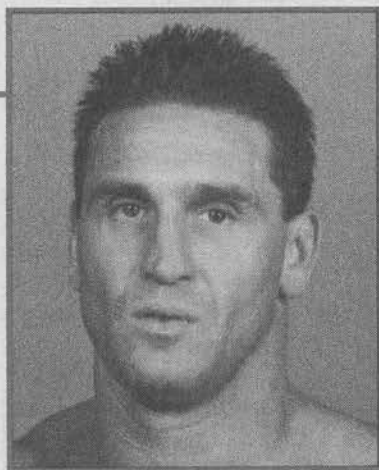


Thumbs Up to Sunny. We're not sure what she did or how she did it, but Sunny is owed a debt of gratitude from the wrestling world for reuniting The Road Warriors. The Legion of Doom reappeared at WrestleMania XIV, won the 15-team battle royal, and looked like a cohesive team. Perhaps Sunny told Hawk and Animal, "If you get back together, you can look at me all the time." That might have done the trick. More likely, Sunny convinced the LOD that they're better together than they are apart, that the WWF World tag team title is theirs for the taking. Sunny's opportunistic, but she's smart, too.

Thumbs Up to Bill Goldberg. Boy, is WCW lucky it has Goldberg on its side. Not only is he big and mean, but he's capable of fighting everybody's battles, including his own. Goldberg saved Rick Steiner from certain disaster—and maybe a long hospitalization—when he saved him from an attack by the NWO at *Thunder* in March. The message is clear: The NWO better not mess with Goldberg. Another message is also clear: The NWO will do everything in its power to get Goldberg on its side. Whether or not it's successful will have a major impact on the WCW-NWO war. For now, Rick Steiner, and WCW, need Goldberg. And he has delivered.

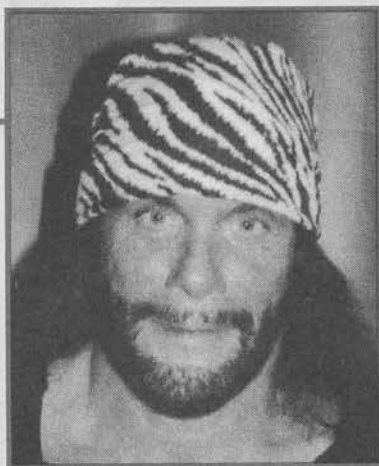
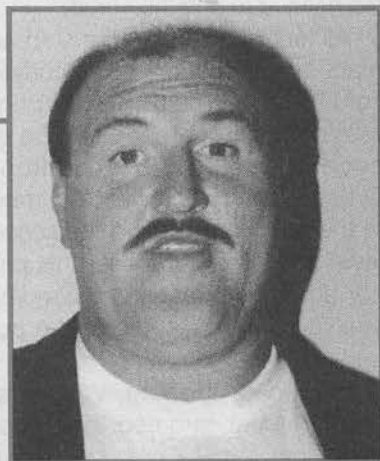


THUMB'S Down



Thumbs Down to Ken Shamrock. What was he thinking? Shamrock had won the WWF Intercontinental title at WrestleMania XIV. Rocky Maivia had submitted to Shamrock's anklelock and WWF officials were ready to award Shamrock the belt. But winning wasn't good enough for Shamrock. He refused to break the anklelock, then, after fighting off an attack by The Nation of Domination, placed Maivia in a second anklelock. Finally, Shamrock suplexed three WWF referees and one official who tried to restore order. Right or wrong, the decision was immediately reversed and the belt was returned to Maivia. He has nobody to blame but himself.

Thumbs Down to Sgt. Slaughter. The WWF commissioner is a former WWF World champion. He's one of the toughest men in the world. So how did he allow himself to get overpowered by Chyna in the Hunter Hearst Helmsley-Owen Hart match at WrestleMania XIV? He handcuffed himself to Chyna to prevent her from interfering. So what happened? Chyna helped "Triple-H" reach the ropes while Hart had him in a "sharpshooter." Seconds later, Chyna threw white powder in Slaughter's face, then punched Hart in the groin. Slaughter didn't prevent any of this. Helmsley won the match. Perhaps next time, Slaughter should just lock Chyna in a cage.



Thumbs Down to Randy Savage. Wasn't it Savage who clocked Hulk Hogan with a can of spray paint, enabling Sting to win the WCW World title at SuperBrawl VIII? Yes, our memories are correct. Sting repaid Savage by saving him from a vicious beating at the hands of the NWO. But three days later, Savage sneak-attacked and piledrived Sting at Uncensored. Said Savage: "I never asked for Sting's help, and I don't need Sting's help!" What? On the other hand, Sting could have told Savage, "I never asked for your help and I don't need your help." Sting just thought he was repaying a favor.

Thumbs Down to Mabel. Not too smart, Mabel. The former member of Men on a Mission is still trying to build a solid singles career. So far, he has fared relatively well in independent federations. He won the Music City Wrestling North American title. Not bad. But Mabel was stripped of the belt after failing to appear for a title defense and the belt was put up for grabs in a 20-man battle royal. How could he have so little consideration for his own career? Winning that title gave Mabel an opportunity to prove himself as a singles wrestler and possibly get noticed again by the majors. Well, he blew that opportunity.



CORRESPONDENTS

Repörrts

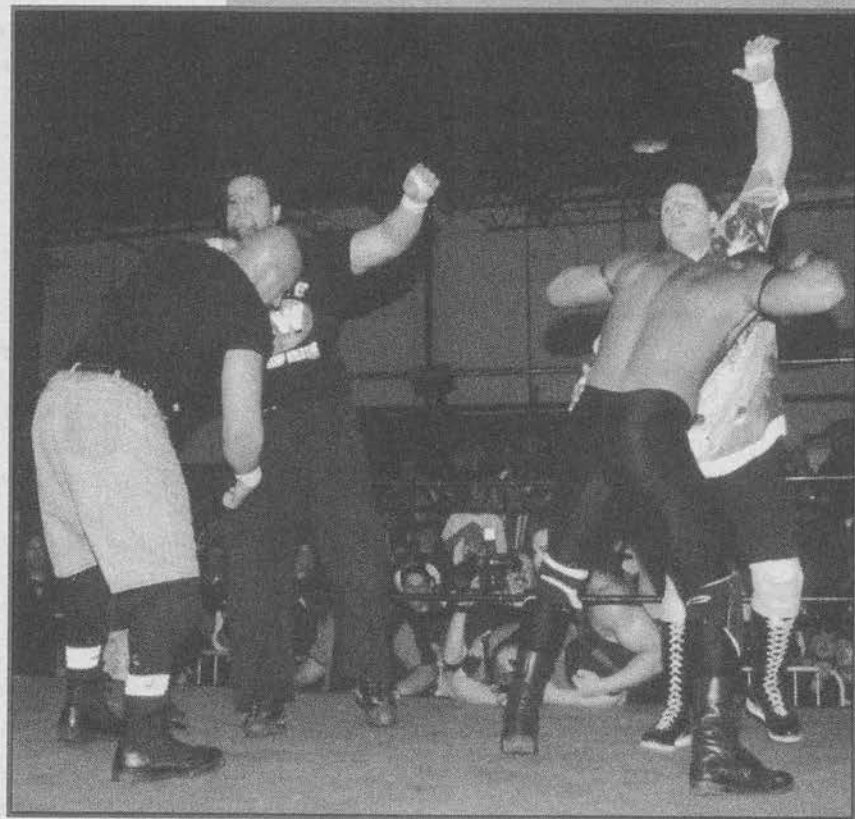
Philadelphia, PA (Correspondent—Frank Krewda): Tommy Dreamer and Mikey Whipwreck may have pinned both Justin Credible and Jason to win their tag team bout at the ECW Arena, but the victory did nothing to end their feud.

All four battled from the start and made no attempt to have a conventional match. Their brawl left ring-side early on and ended up on the second level of the building. Dreamer and Whipwreck climbed to the stage area above the second level and Dreamer tossed his partner down onto Jason and Credible, sending them crashing to the second level floor.

Back near the ring, Whipwreck and Dreamer rammed their opponents into a metal pole on the way back toward the ring. Later, as Dreamer battled Jason, Credible saved his partner by slide-kicking Dreamer. With Dreamer dazed, Credible sat him on a chair and dropkicked him. Credible then used a drop toehold to smack Dreamer's face into the chair. After Dreamer reversed the toehold, he crawled toward Whipwreck, but Credible nailed him with a low blow before he could make the tag.

That's when Mikey stormed into the ring, attacking both Credible and Jason. Dreamer soon recovered enough to help Mikey, nailing Credible with a "Death Valley Driver," but Nicole Bass pulled the referee from the ring before he could make a count.

At that point, Chastity, another member of Credible and Jason's entourage, got involved, too, by



Tommy Dreamer and Mikey Whipwreck attack Justin Credible and Jason, respectively, during a tag team match at the ECW Arena. Dreamer and Mikey won, but Jason and Credible didn't take the loss too well.

scratching the ref's eyes. But after Dreamer and Whipwreck executed simultaneous "stunners," the referee made the three-count on both Credible and Jason.

After the match ended, the action continued with Bass attacking Dreamer. Beulah saved Dreamer, but when she attempted to DDT Bass, Credible knocked her away with a flying forearm. Chastity and Bass then grabbed Beulah and forced her to watch as Credible piledrived both Whipwreck and Dreamer before leaving the ring.

In other bouts: Axl Rotten & Mahoney beat Danny Doring & Amish Roadkill and Tracey Smothers & Little Guido in a three-way dance ... Doug Furnas beat Bobby Duncum Jr. ... ECW tag team champs Chris Candido & Lance Storm defeated Jerry Lynn & Chris Chetti ... Spike Dudley beat Buh Buh Ray Dudley ... Al Snow defeated Rob Van Dam ... Sabu beat 2 Cold Scorpio ... ECW TV champ Bam Bam Bigelow beat The Sandman.

(Continued on page 56)

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The voice of ECW is ...?

- 1) Joey Styles
- 2) Paul E. Dangerously
- 3) Tommy Dreamer
- 4) Bill Alfonso

Lex Luger is also known as ...?

- 1) Totally Awesome
- 2) The Six Pack
- 3) The Total Package
- 4) None of the above

True or False: The Giant competed in the 1988 Summer Olympics as a member of the Austrian basketball team?

- 1) True 2) False

The Undertaker was once tag team partners with ...?

- 1) Lou Albano
- 2) Sgt. Slaughter
- 3) Rick Steiner
- 4) None of the above

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Y O U

Asked Us

Q: "My question is for Reckless Youth: You've been wrestling in various independents for some time now, and you've won many titles. Why haven't we seen you in the WWF or WCW challenging for one of their titles?"—Matt Winz, Yuma, AZ

A: "Before I answer that," the cocky Youth said, "just let me say that it's about time somebody stood up and made some noise for Reckless Youth, the best wrestler on the independent scene—or anywhere else,

for that matter. The only thing stopping me from winning any of those belts is all the red tape I gotta climb through to get a shot with one of the Big Two promotions. But once I get there, all the Taka Michinokus and Chris Jerichos of the world better watch out, because Reckless Youth will steal their belts in no time. Don't worry, Matt. Before long, Reckless Youth will be fighting for one of those titles at a sold-out arena near you."

...

Q: "This question is for the 'Dog-faced Gremlin,' Rick Steiner: Rick, aside from the professional problems that Scott's defection to the NWO has caused, how has it affected your personal lives?"—Matt Day, Madison, WI

A: "It's just terrible," a crestfallen Rick muttered. "The only time I see him is at the arena. We don't hang out anymore and we don't travel together, naturally. Scotty hasn't even called our parents since he went NWO. But that's the new Scotty, I guess. He's afraid to face our mother and father, he's afraid to face our old friend Lex



This is about as close as Rick has been able to get to Scott Steiner since Scott went NWO. Scott is a changed man, says Rick, and obviously not for the better.

Luger, and he's afraid to face me. Scotty used to be dependable, like a dog, but now he's sneaky and scared, like a cat. I lose more respect for him every day. Everything is different now. I just can't believe he broke up the team."

...

Q: "I would like to ask Hunter Hearst Helmsley a question: 'Triple-H,' why don't you guys in DeGeneration X ever give Chyna the respect and recognition she deserves? She does everything for you idiots, and you just brush her off and ignore her."—Daniel Bagley, Portland, ME

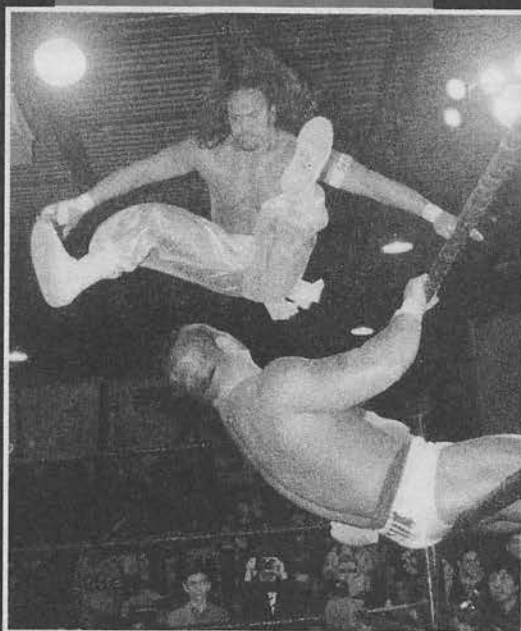
A: "If your question wasn't so stupid, I'd ignore the fact that you called me an idiot," Hunter snapped. "But as far as Chyna is concerned, you can tell how

(Continued on page 57)



Reckless Youth (shown moonsaulting Julio Sanchez) has won many titles on the independent circuit. He thinks he'd fare well in the WWF or WCW if given a chance.

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Introducing

By Frank Krewda

STEVE BLACKMAN

AS FAR BACK as Steve Blackman can remember, he has displayed an affinity for two activities: baseball and the martial arts.

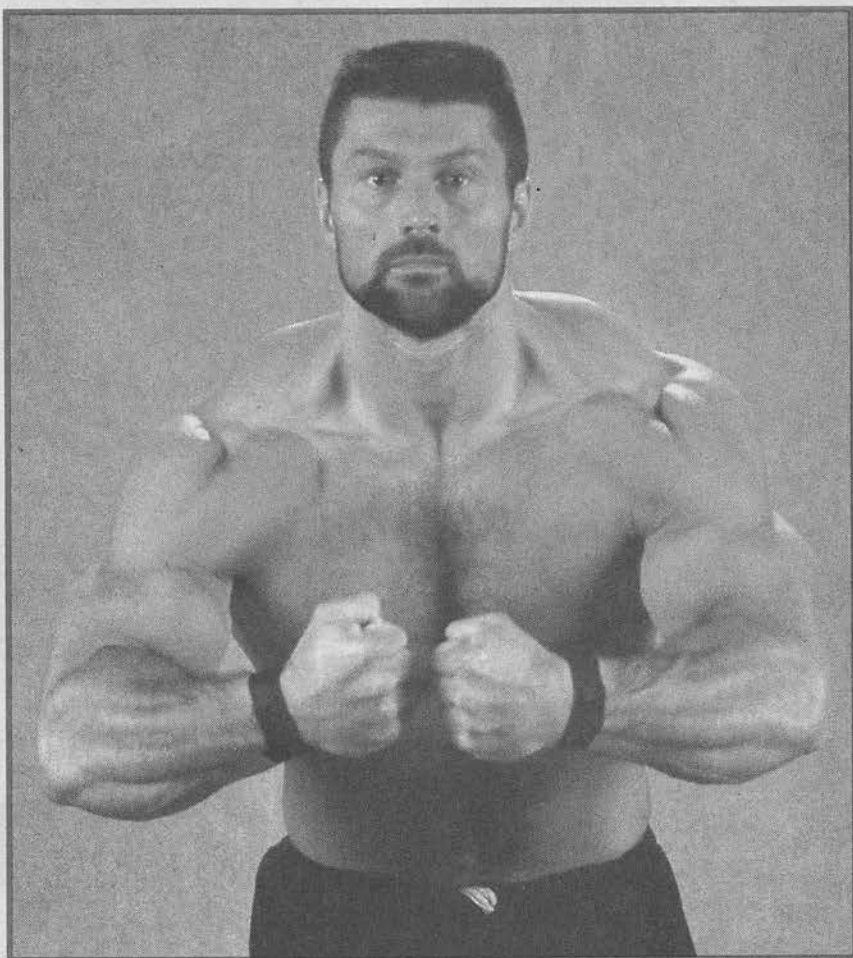
Even dating back to high school, the 6'1", 245-pound native of Annville, Pennsylvania, was determined to pursue a career as a catcher in the national pastime. He even enrolled at Seminole College in Sanford, Florida, the same school that produced such baseball stars as Tim Lincecum and Bobby Thigpen.

But while in school, Blackman also continued his training in the martial arts, particularly in the discipline of Isshinryu, and his passion for this brand of self-defense quickly overcame his love of baseball. After one year, Blackman's collegiate career ended, but he remained in Florida and made ends meet by working as a bouncer in bars until he and his girlfriend, Debra, grew weary of that lifestyle.

"I got tired of the fights and getting into trouble every night. So my girlfriend suggested professional wrestling as a career change," Blackman, 35, recalls.

Unfettered by responsibilities in Florida, Blackman headed north to Orange, Connecticut, home of Pasarillo's Quest Training Center, in 1986. There he was schooled in the mat sport by former WWF tag team champion Tony Altmore.

Altmore put Blackman up against some of the world's strongest men, including Ted Arcidi, who at one time owned the record for the world's greatest benchpress,



The fluorescent nunchaku sticks and long black pants have made Steve Blackman's name synonymous with martial arts proficiency. But underneath the dour face of this new WWF star exists a determined athlete who had to overcome a microscopic obstacle to get where he is today

before allowing him to make his debut in August 1986.

Initially, Blackman wrestled in Puerto Rico, then travelled to the Orient for a brief stint with New Japan. Eventually, though, he settled in Calgary, where he defeated Jerry Morrow for the Stampede TV title on June 24, 1988. Around this time, he caught the eye of WWF talent scouts and made his WWF debut in November 1989. But before he could make an impact there, he had some unfinished business with Calgary Stampede and his South African rival, Gama Singh.

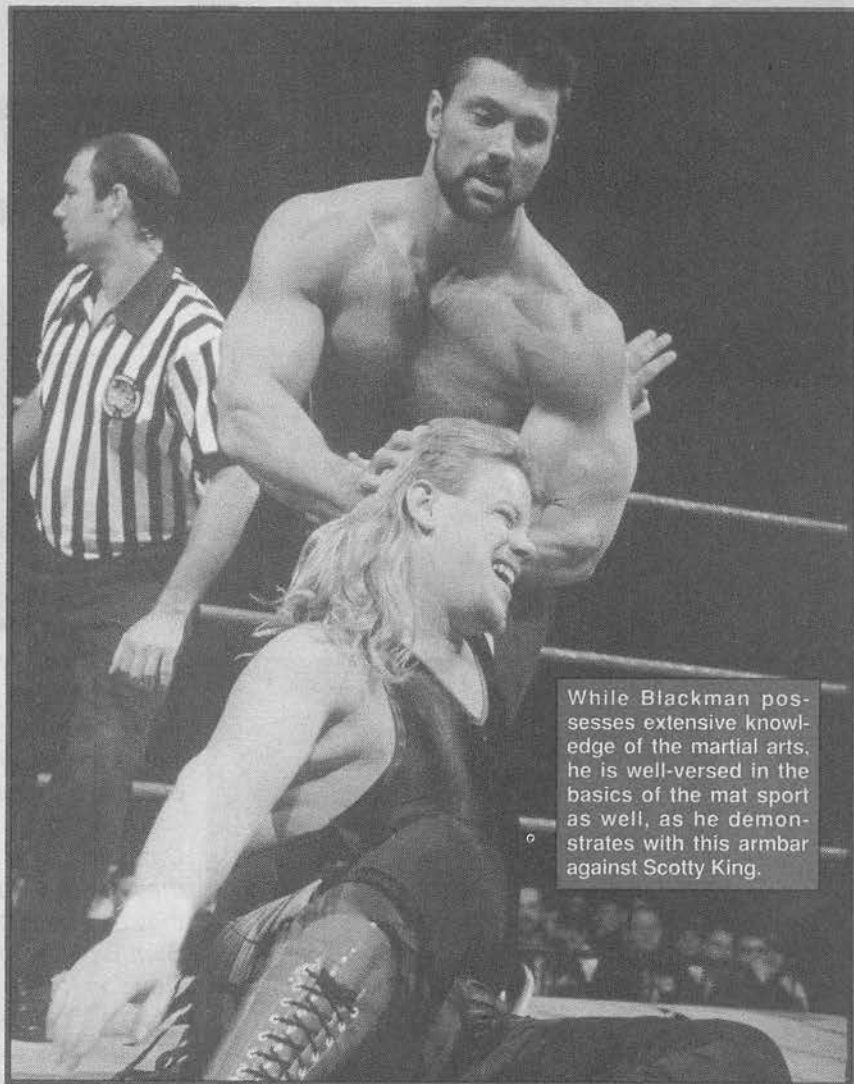
With the blessing of the WWF, which promised to use him after his return, Blackman travelled to Durban, South Africa, in May 1989 and beat the hometown hero. But Blackman doesn't have fond memories of the victory. Soon after it was over, he was diagnosed with malaria and dysentery.

"I felt good during the match," Blackman recalls. "But afterward, I knew something was wrong. I felt weak and dizzy. I lost over 30 pounds in six days and was literally bedridden for a year and a half. I still feel the effects of malaria sometimes, but not like I did during the first three years."

Blackman attempted comebacks with the WWF in 1991 and 1992, but the physical demands of life on the road and the lingering effects of the diseases often left him too fatigued. After one last try in 1993, Blackman assured WWF officials they wouldn't hear from him until he was ready.

With his wrestling career on hold, Blackman continued his study of martial arts, learning Kento and Shotocon (he holds a third-degree black belt in the latter) while preparing for a return to wrestling.

"The training was indispensable," says Blackman. "Studying Kento and Shotocon kept me focused and allowed me to try new maneuvers while polishing the things I already knew. It gave me tremendous confidence in the ring."



Martial arts training gave Blackman confidence outside the ring as well. Enough confidence, in fact, to chase Team Canada (Doug Furnas, Davey Boy Smith, Jim Neidhart, and Phil Lafon) when they attacked Vader at a *Raw Is War* broadcast on November 3, 1997. "The Stranger," as Blackman was originally called, emerged from a ringside seat to lay out those four men with his martial arts attack. Six days later, he replaced The Patriot as the fourth member of Team USA at Survivor Series. On November 9, 1997, after missing eight years of action, Steve Blackman was back wrestling.

Since his return, Blackman has teamed frequently with Ken Shamrock, who boasts an impressive fighting background of his own.

"Ken and I have similar styles, similar builds, and we've talked about teaming before, but we'd always been too busy," he says. Shamrock has been focused on winning the Intercontinental belt, while Blackman has been feuding with Jeff Jarrett of late.

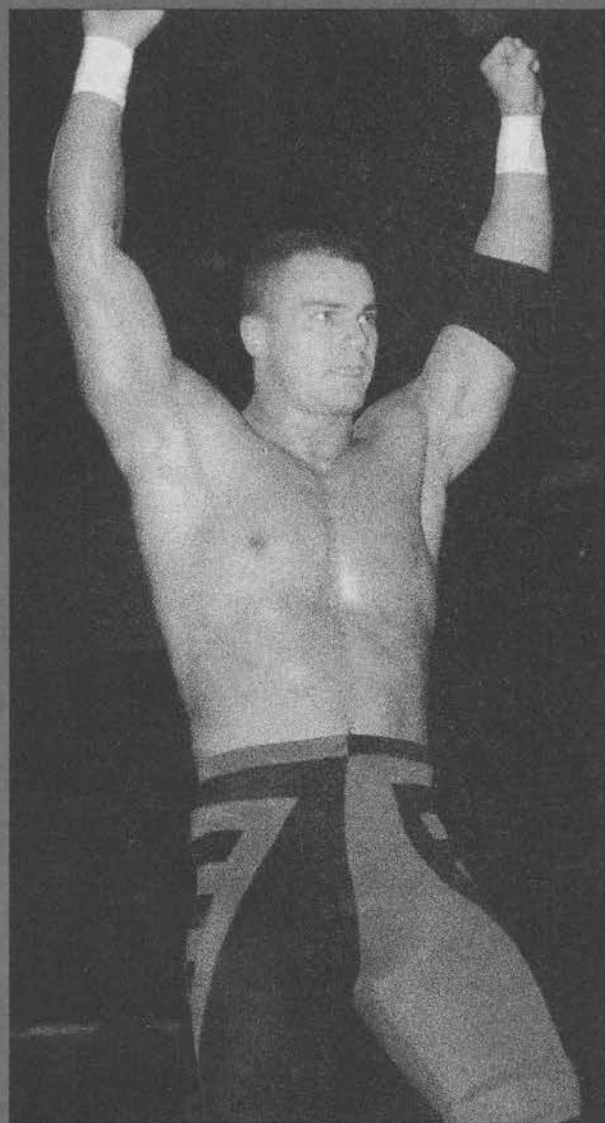
But that's fine by Blackman, who says tag teams can wait. Now that he's made it to the WWF, he is committed to realizing his ultimate goal: winning the World title: "I've always said, 'If you're not interested in being the champion, why even bother competing?'"

The "Lethal Weapon" obviously has no problem telling everyone what his intentions are, but if Blackman's eight-year climb back into the big time proves anything, it is that he is a man of action, not words. Just ask Team Canada. □

Q

LANCE STORM

A



USUALLY, TAG TEAM partners are athletes bonded by respect. They must, after all, work together to achieve a common goal. Some are close outside of their sport; others merely practice and compete alongside each other.

Then there's the team of Lance Storm and Chris Candido. They team. They publicly say how badly they'd like to beat the tar out of each other. And they're the ECW tag team champions. When Bam Bam Bigelow left The Triple Threat and beat Shane Douglas for the ECW heavyweight title last October, Douglas and Candido looked for another wrestler to fill Bigelow's slot. Sunny, Candido's girlfriend, suggested Storm, who was accepted as an associate.

Storm and Candido began to click in the ring. Together, the duo defeated The Full-Blooded Italians to bring gold back into The Triple Threat.

Signs of strain soon began to show. Candido refused to allow Storm to score any pinfalls, often shoving him off a beaten foe so he could score the pinfall. When Candido became jealous of the attention Sunny was giving to his partner, Storm was kicked out and Bigelow was welcomed back into the fold.

At *Living Dangerously*, Candido and Douglas were to face Storm and a mystery partner. Storm's partner turned out to be Sunny, who quickly turned against her partner, revealing the whole arrangement to be a Triple Threat plot.

Despite the breakup of the team, ECW has ruled that Storm and Candido must remain champions until they are beaten. If either man does something to cost the team the belts, he will be fired from ECW.

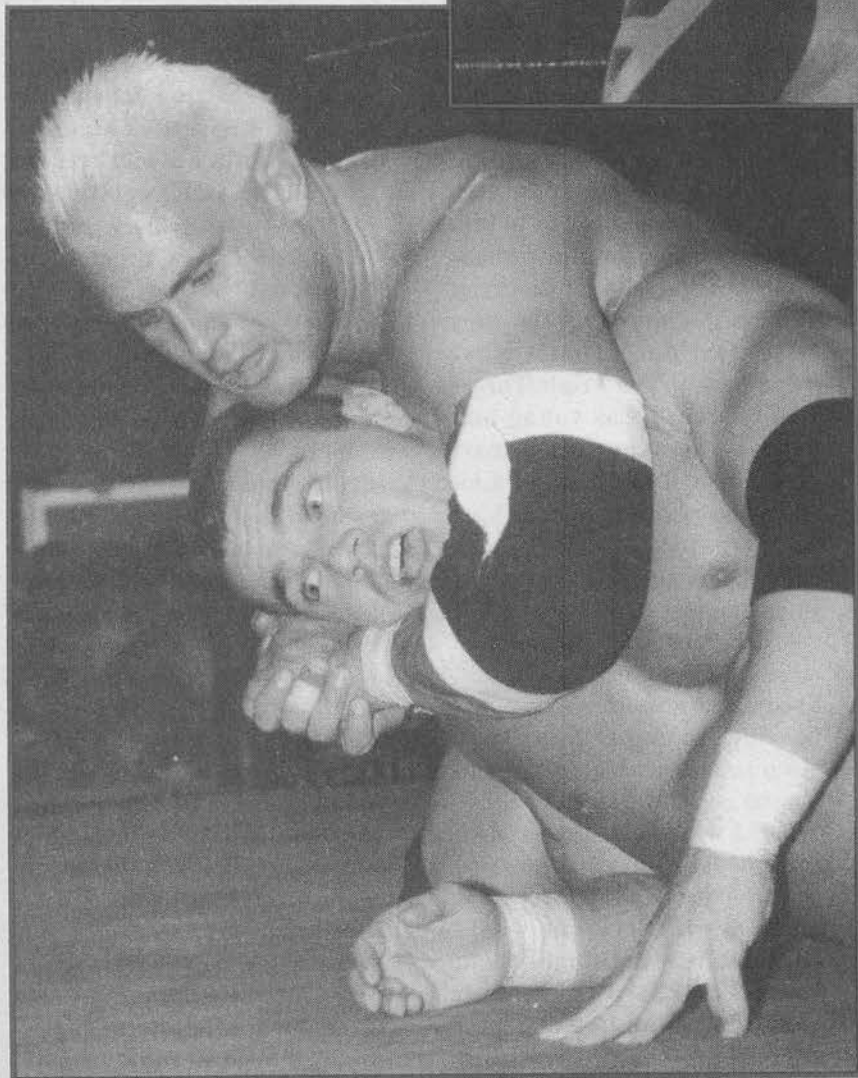
THE WRESTLER sent Dan Murphy to ask Storm about his short-lived alliance with Sunny and what it's like to defend a title with his greatest enemy.

Q: Lance, you're currently involved in one of the most unusual situations in wrestling history. What is it like having to team with Chris Candido, a man who has done everything he can to humiliate you, including having his girlfriend pretend she's on your side for one of the biggest matches of your career?

A: You know, Dan, a lot of stuff went through my head in the days right before and right after *Living Dangerously*. Sunny was really able to pry her way into my mind and get my thoughts off the task at hand, which was to prove myself once and for all with a win over Candido. I was a real mess for a while. Then Al Snow took me out for a cup of coffee and put things into perspective for me. I don't like Candido and he doesn't like me,



Lance Storm and Chris Candido are ECW tag team champions (above). Ironically, they're also bitter enemies (left). Surprisingly, it's not a particularly uncomfortable situation for Storm.



but together we're the ECW tag team champions. Unlike most teams, I now have the utmost confidence that my partner won't let me down, because if he does, he'll be fired. It actually puts me in a pretty strong position.

Q: Al Snow told you that? No offense, but I don't really know if it's wise to seek advice from a guy who's managed by a mannequin head.

A: Al's a good man. A little misunderstood, maybe, but what he said made a lot of sense to me. Hey, I'm still a champion. I'm making a champion's money. So I think my partner is garbage. Big deal. I can ride this out for as long as I can. The great thing is I can still get matches against Candido on the same cards where we defend the belts. And I've beaten him.

Q: Can you tell me how you became involved with Sunny? Was she setting you up from the get-go?

A: I really don't know. I suppose I wouldn't be the first guy to have been used by a woman to get a boyfriend jealous. Still, I thought we had a real friendship for a while there, so I just don't know now. Anyhow, I met Sunny at some shows, and we spent a lot of time talking to each other backstage. It was all innocent, really. We're about the same age and we had a lot in common, so we talked and got along well.

Q: How did Candido react to all of this?

A: Well, I've got to admit that Sunny is a beautiful woman, on the outside at least, but I really wasn't interested in her romantically. She was Chris' girl. I never said anything to Candido. I didn't think he'd mind. I mean, come on. Men are always throwing themselves at Sunny. Chris was used to it. I figured he'd be happy she had someone with her to watch over her. I had nothing to hide from him.

Q: But how did you feel when she asked Candido and Douglas to offer you a spot in The Triple Threat because she liked the way you, to use her words, "filled out your tights"? Did you still think that she was only interested in being friends?

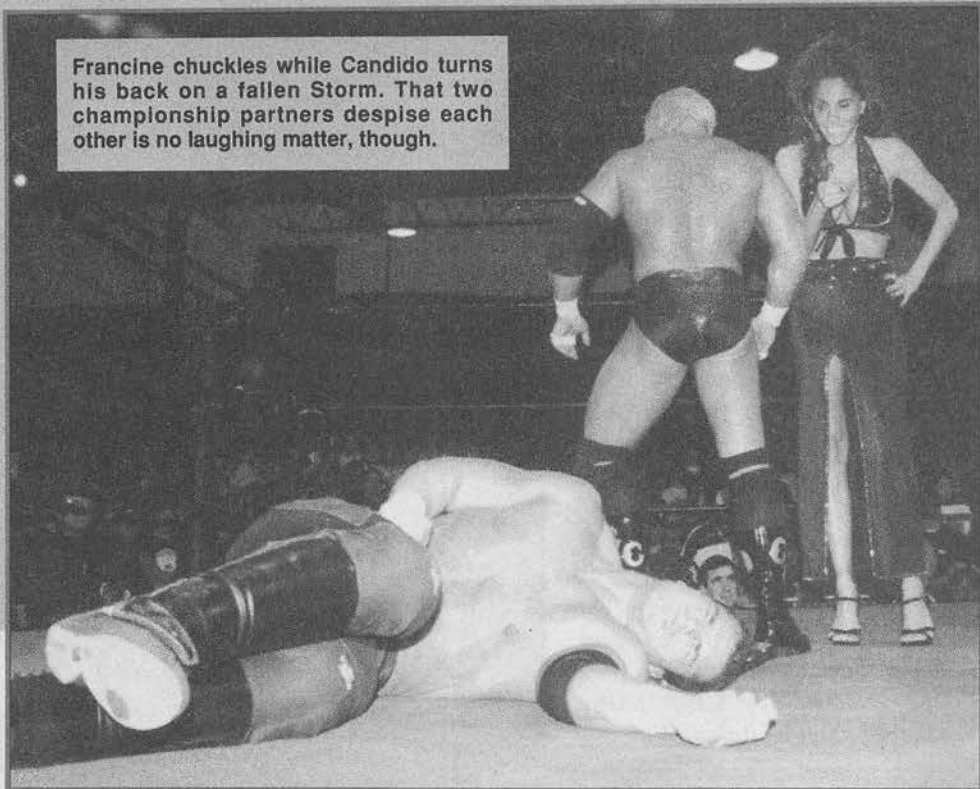
A: Sunny's very hard to figure out. She'll say something like that and then it's like it never happened. She's flirtatious. I thought nothing of it.

Q: But Candido did.

A: Yeah, Candido obviously did.

Q: Clearly you and Candido had a lot of tension before he kicked you

Francine chuckles while Candido turns his back on a fallen Storm. That two championship partners despise each other is no laughing matter, though.



out of The Triple Threat. Why did you put up with all of the abuse he and Douglas doled out on you?

A: Joining forces with Candido and Douglas put me on the map in ECW. It was my big break. You know how you hear about a lot of actresses who do cheap and tawdry movies when they first start out? That's what being part of The Triple Threat was for me. I was young and needed the exposure. Ideals don't amount to a heck of a lot when you're trying to claw your way to the top.

Q: After Sunny turned against you at Living Dangerously, it was Snow who came out and saved you from an attack from Candido, Douglas, Sunny, and Francine. Would you consider teaming with Snow again someday, or are you planning on pursuing a singles belt?

A: When I was a kid, I'd tell people I was going to be a pro wrestler and everyone would laugh at me. Everyone would tell me I was too small. Well, I'm only 5'10" and I only weigh about 220 pounds, but I'm a champion today. Now that

cruiserweight and light heavyweight wrestling has really taken off, I have a lot of opportunities to win belts all over the world. Or, if I were to stay involved in tag team wrestling, Al Snow would be the first guy I'd ask to be my teammate. But for now, me and Candido are still the ECW tag team champs.

Q: How would you rate your team with Candido among other teams competing today?

A: Professionally, I have a lot of respect for Candido. He has great mat skills and his "Blond Bombshell" is a devastating finisher. I used that move to pin him one on one right after Living Dangerously. I also have a lot of confidence in my own abilities. Now that Paul E. Dangerously has declared that he'll fire one of us who purposefully does something to cause us to lose the belts, we're both very alert and crisp in the ring. I mean, what if Candido holds someone for me to hit them with a kick, the guy ducks, and I hit Candido? If he's pinned, Paul E. might think I did that on pur-

pose. I could get fired over that. To answer your question, I think we're a great team, as good as any other team in wrestling.

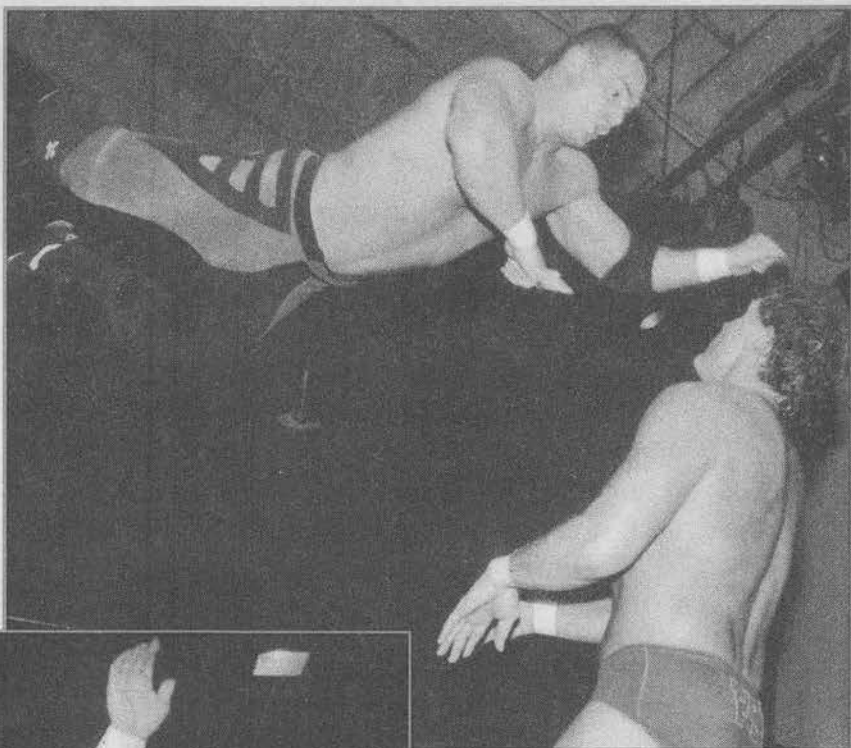
Q: Would you ever try to patch things up with Candido or Sunny?

A: Not on my life.

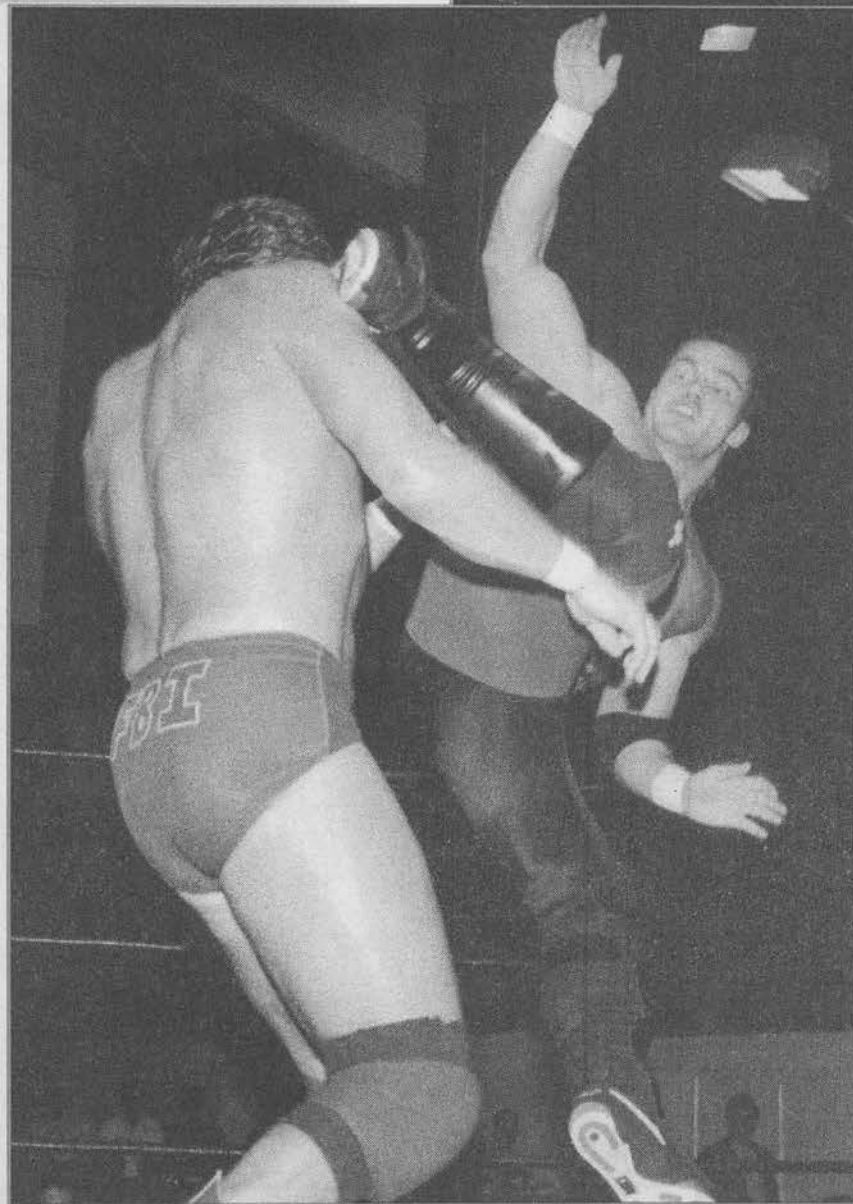
Q: But you still think you make a great team?

A: It's funny, isn't it? We both want to score the win to show up the other guy, so both of us go out and give our all. It's a matter of pride, I guess. Neither of us wants to be the guy to let the other off the hook. Maybe more teams should hate each other.

Q: Back to Sunny. She and Francine nearly came to blows when Sunny



Storm (dominating Tracey Smothers) says that when all is said and done, he'll be the one standing on top of the ECW mountain, not Candido. He has beaten his tag team partner a few times recently.



said she knew who your mystery partner would be for Living Dangerously and then wouldn't tell anyone. At that time, it looked like Sunny had broken off from Candido. What was your relationship with her like at that time?

A: Let's just say that Sunny will go a long way to pull the wool over someone's eyes.

Q: Um, okay. Do you still feel that you're living in the shadow of your more well-known partner?

A: Listen, I told you I respect Candido—and Douglas, for that matter. But now the ball's in my court. I've got The Triple Threat by the nose. They hate me and they have to deal with me. I've beaten Candido in the ring, where it counts. Maybe he can take solace in having Sunny, but believe me, she's not that big of a deal. Lance Storm is holding all the cards here, and Lance Storm is going to be the one standing on top when the smoke clears. □

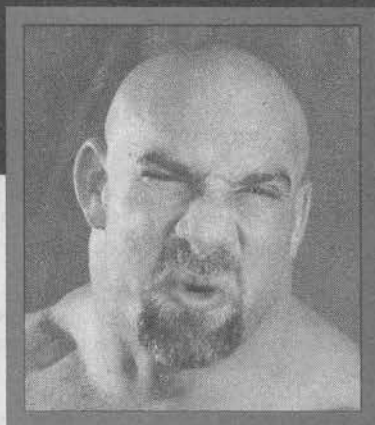
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THE WRESTLER

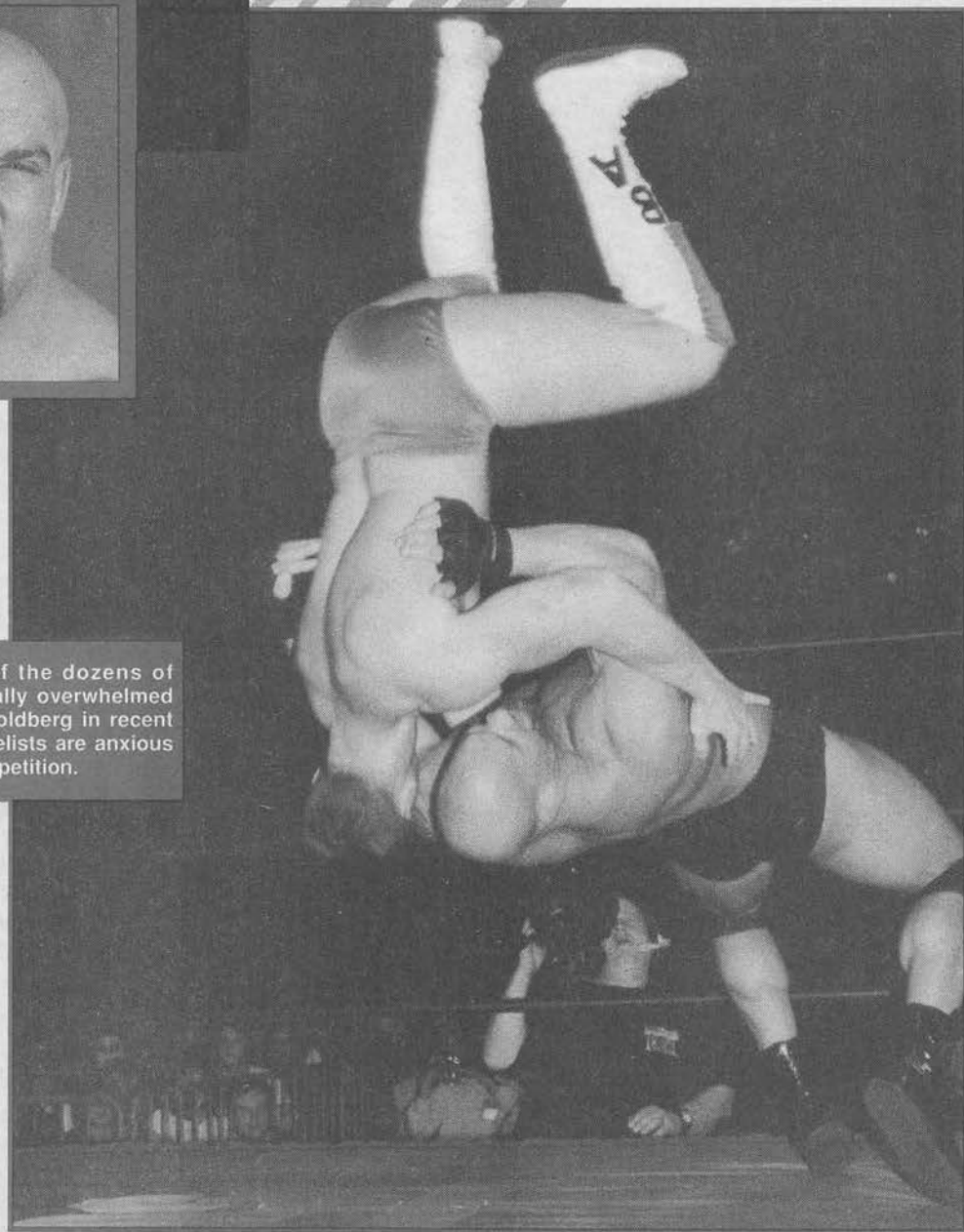
Ray

PANEL EXAMINES

BILL GOLDBERG



Brad Armstrong is one of the dozens of wrestlers to have been totally overwhelmed and overpowered by Bill Goldberg in recent months. Several of our panelists are anxious to see him face tougher competition.





CAPT. LOU ALBANO

"I can't remember the last time I saw a wrestler get so much attention just by walking to the ring ... and the Captain has a long memory, brother. But I'll tell ya what: Goldberg needs to step up the competition. I mean, he won't improve unless somebody tests him in the ring, and there are plenty of people who could give him a good match. I like what I've seen from Goldberg so far, but the Captain's gonna hedge his bets until this guy takes on some of the best."

Capt. Lou Albano, "The Guiding Light," has managed 13 different tag teams to a record 17 WWF World tag team titles.



KILLER KOWALSKI

"Boy, I'd have loved to train this guy. He has all the tools. He's big, he's strong, he's intense, and he's got killer instinct. I know a lot of promoters who would throw him in there against a big name just for a giant payday, but Goldberg is pacing himself just fine. The most impressive thing about Goldberg is his focus. The fans go crazy when he wrestles, but he has been able to shut that out and destroy his opponents right away. Let's see if he can keep it up."

Killer Kowalski, one of the most sadistic rule-breakers in the history of the sport, runs a wrestling school in Malden, Massachusetts.



HARLEY RACE

"I've seen lots of guys like Goldberg before. Young guys who explode on the scene, become phenoms in short order, then fizzle out because they can't handle adversity. Quite honestly, I'm not all that impressed by Goldberg yet. He's only demonstrated two or three moves and hasn't gone longer than a few minutes at a time. Bald, bearded, and thickly muscled might be a big hit with the fans, but I'm not sure it works in the ring these days. I need to see more."

Harley Race, an eight-time NWA World champion, has also managed top stars like Lex Luger and Big Van Vader.



FABULOUS MOOLAH

"This Bill Goldberg is something else, darlin'. In fact, he's downright scary. I've never let personal feelings interfere with my matches, but I can't help but feel sorry for a lot of the poor guys who climb into the ring with Goldberg. Sure, he's still a little raw, and he could add a few more moves to his repertoire, but look how he walks right through opponents. That's no fluke. His style is so basic, but nobody has figured out how to beat him yet."

Fabulous Moolah, the finest woman wrestler in history, held the World title for 28 years. She now trains wrestlers in Columbia, South Carolina.



OLE ANDERSON

"If anybody can appreciate Goldberg's style, it's me. Actually, this guy reminds me of myself in my younger days. All business in the ring. No nonsense. No flash. It's good to see that somebody still wrestles like a man amidst all the acrobats out there today. With his size and strength and intensity, I don't know why he isn't wearing a belt by now. That tells me something about him. It tells me that people must be ducking him."

Ole Anderson, a five-time former NWA World tag team champion and founding member of The Four Horsemen, has been retired for several years.

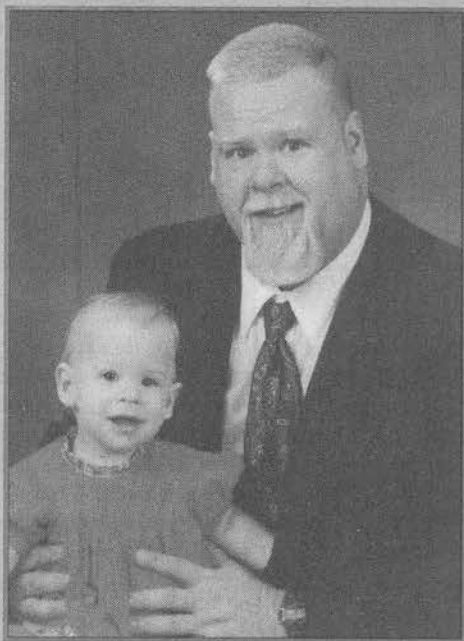


PAUL ORNDORFF

"It will be interesting to see how Goldberg responds to his first real test. We all know he's strong and can withstand a lot of punishment, but can he counter an aerial attack? Since no one has been able to put him on the mat yet, we don't know if he can trade holds, either. Sure, he's raised a few eyebrows with his power game, but he'll need to develop some more technical skills if he wants to make a real impact in the sport and last for a long time."

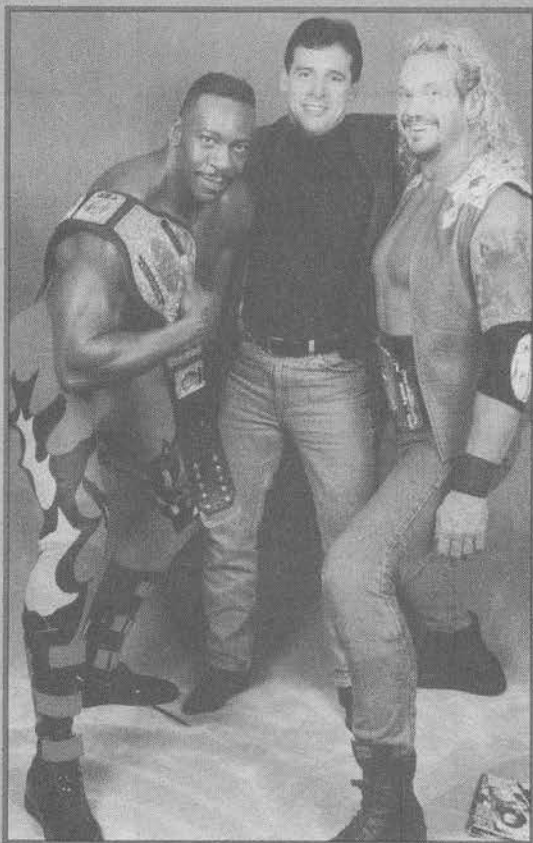
Former WCW TV and World tag team champion Paul Orndorff retired from active competition after suffering a neck injury in December 1995.

THE SQUARED CIRCLE



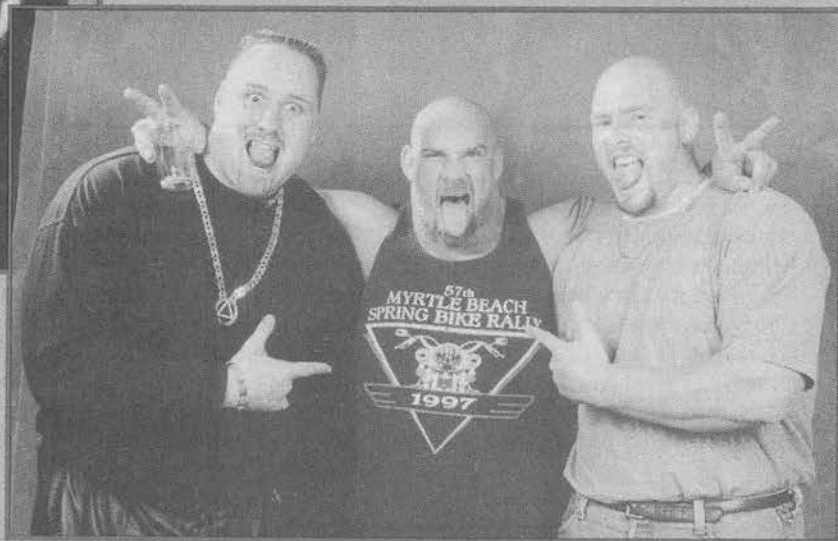
▲ The Mad Russian doesn't look so mad in this portrait, taken with his one-year-old daughter, Brianna Leigh, whom he affectionately calls "The Little Mad Russian."

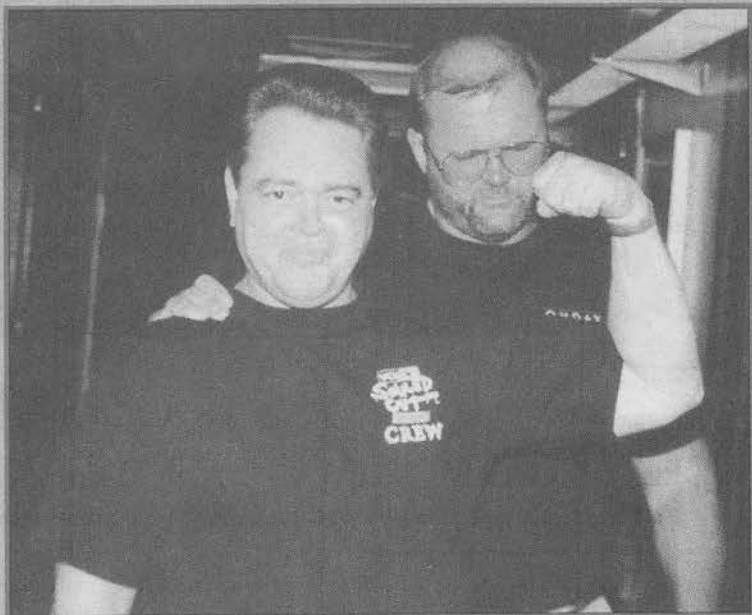
▼ THE WRESTLER caught up with WCW Executive Vice President Nick Lambros, who stood still long enough to take this picture with TV champ Booker T and U.S. champ Dallas Page.



▲ Sweets for sweets. Miss Elizabeth and Chae of the Nitro girls raided the candy dish before a recent Nitro.

► Even outside the ring, his intensity is contagious. Bill Goldberg hams it up backstage with Philadelphia Eagles offensive lineman Jerry Crafts (left) and friend Matt Storm (right).





◀ WCW official Mickey Jay reminds Arn Anderson who's in charge, although the former Horseman gets along much better with the referees in retirement than he did during his career.



▲ Bill Alfonso relaxes before an ECW card with some pizza and an issue of Inside Wrestling. Judging by the look on his face, he doesn't like what he's reading.



▲ "Diamond" Dallas Page's biggest fan and head cheerleader is none other than his mother, Sylvia Falkenburg, who gives our photographer the "Diamond cutter" signal.

► Ultimo Dragon poses outside his "dojo" in Mexico with some of his star pupils. Several of Ultimo's students have already appeared on Monday Nitro and Thunder.



Spot Light ON...

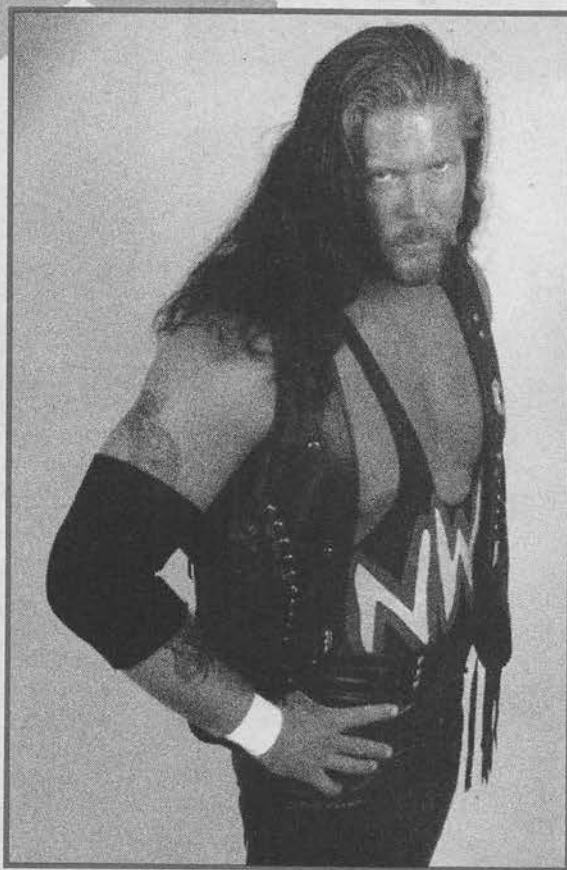
Kevin Nash

"BIG SEXY THE Giant Killer" is Kevin Nash's handle of choice these days. Nash has experimented with the names Supershredder, Dr. X, Master Blaster, Master Blaster Steele, Oz, Vinnie Vegas, and Diesel since making his professional debut in 1990.

Oz first showed up in WCW in 1991, but he got nowhere under the tutelage of Kevin Sullivan. In 1992, he changed his name to Vinnie Vegas and dumped Sullivan in favor of Harley Race, but the results were the same.

Nash's career began to take shape after he arrived in the WWF in 1993. Introduced to WWF fans as Diesel—Shawn Michaels' bodyguard—Nash helped Michaels regain the Intercontinental belt from Marty Jannetty in June 1993. Nash would capture the I-C belt himself on April 13, 1994, by beating none other than Scott "Razor Ramon" Hall in Rochester, New York.

The two Outsiders are inseparable now, but they were once bitter enemies in the WWF. Nash lost the belt back to Hall at SummerSlam '94 in Chicago after Michaels' interference backfired. One night earlier, Nash and Michaels had teamed to beat The Headshrinkers for the WWF World tag team belts. Still, there was an undeniable rift



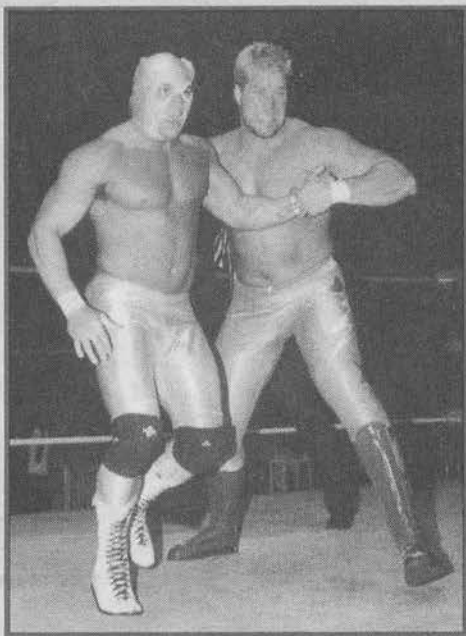
growing between them. Unable to overcome their differences, Nash and Michaels finally vacated the title at Survivor Series '94.

Nash struck gold again just three days later when he beat Bob Backlund in eight seconds to become the WWF World heavyweight champion. His title victory infuriated Michaels and ignited a feud, but the former champs patched things up one night after Nash

beat Michaels at WrestleMania XI. They recaptured the tag team belts from Owen Hart and Yokozuna on September 24, 1995. One day later, WWF President Gorilla Monsoon stripped them on a technicality.

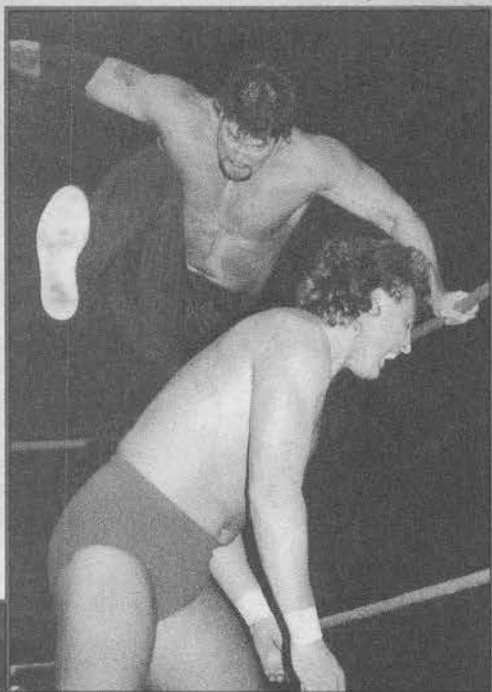
After dropping the World belt to Bret Hart in November '95, Nash saw his career begin to stagnate. A few months later, it was announced that he would be joining WCW. He made an immediate impact after returning to that federation in June 1996, and joined Hall in attacking WCW Senior Vice President Eric Bischoff. As The Outsiders, Hall and Nash beat Harlem Heat for the WCW World tag team title on October 27, 1996. Hall and Syxx, who replaced an injured Nash, dropped the belts a year later, but the founding members of the NWO have since recaptured the belts twice from the Steiners, the most recent time being at SuperBrawl VIII.

Nash has recently become a target of WCW Executive Committee Chairman J.J. Dillon, who outlawed the "jackknife" power bomb after Nash injured The Giant with the move at this year's Souled Out. But Dillon's huge fines alone have not stopped Nash from trying to prove that he is wrestling's true giant. He has earned some time in our "Spotlight." □



August 1991: Kevin Nash, then known as Oz, whips Brian Pillman, then known as Yellow Dog, into the ropes. Nash's first go-around in WCW was uneventful, as he never progressed past mid-card status.

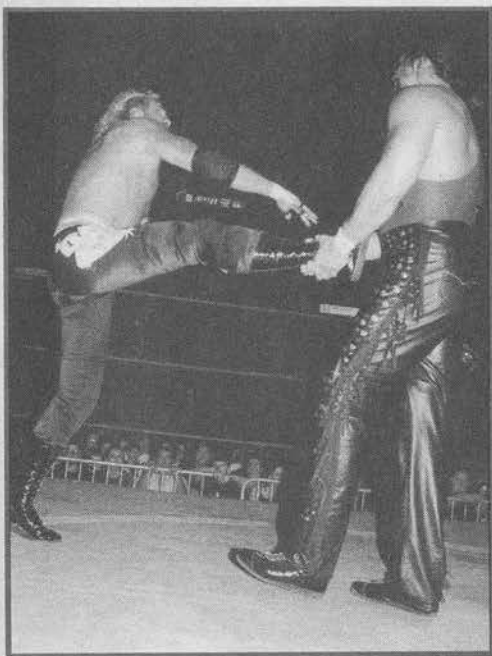
October 1992: Vinnie Vegas fared a little better than Oz in WCW, but not much. Nash handled opponents like Erik Watts relatively easily, but still never made it to the upper echelon of WCW's roster.



May 1994: The Diesel years in the WWF were very kind to Nash, who accumulated a fine collection of belts, including the Intercontinental strap, which he won from—and later lost to—Scott "Razor Ramon" Hall.



April 1995: Shawn Michaels was Nash's first ally in the WWF, and together they twice won the WWF tag team belts. But Nash and Michaels fought against each other as often as they did side by side.



December 1997: "Big Sexy The Giant Killer" is on a mission to prove he is WCW's only real giant. To prove his point, Nash has systematically attempted to destroy top WCW stars such as Dallas Page.



October 1996: After joining Scott Hall in WCW, The Outsiders, as Hall and Nash call themselves, beat Harlem Heat for the WCW tag team belts. They have since won them two additional times.

Message To Luna:

THIS IS NOT THE WAY TO MAKE UP!

By Dan Murphy

THE FOLLOWING STORY might have happened. Or it might not have. It's awfully difficult to know for sure, but we'll tell you anyway.

A 24-year-old woman working as a cashier in a posh Connecticut cosmetics store claims she saw the strangest-dressed couple she had ever seen enter the store. The man, well over six feet tall and 250 pounds if he was an ounce, was wearing black leather pants, an aqua-blue fishnet tank top, and a black studded dog collar. His companion, a shorter woman with immense arms and braided hair streaked pink, green, orange, and brown, wore a barely there miniskirt and a leather top.

Needless to say, the woman's curiosity was piqued.

The cashier left her post at the register and discreetly tailed the unorthodox duo. They passed a display of expensive perfumes. The man sampled a few; the woman cackled. They walked on.

They came upon a rack of hair dyes. They loaded up their arms and pressed on.

They finally arrived at a makeover counter. They paused, and a wicked leer enveloped the woman's face.



About the only thing scarier than what Luna sees staring back at her in the mirror is the potential for violence as her war with Sable reaches new heights!

Luna and Sable were handcuffed to ringposts as a stipulation for a Goldust vs. Marc Mero bout. Luna, however, isn't too fond of rules and stipulations—or of Sable, for that matter, as these photos ably indicate. Luna escaped her handcuffs and humiliated the helpless Sable.



That's when the mascara hit the fan. Literally.

Ten security guards and several thousand dollars worth of damage later, the bizarre couple fled the store.

One would be hard-pressed to find two more different women than Sable and Luna Vachon. Sable works hard to make men's hearts flutter. Luna goes out of her way to make men's stomachs quiver.

Perhaps it is a deep-seeded jealousy that is beneath Luna's absolute disdain for the lovely Sable. Maybe it is that jealousy that was fueling Luna's actions as she smeared makeup all over the face of a helpless Sable, who was handcuffed to a ringpost, a few weeks before WrestleMania XIV. Then again, maybe it's something else entirely.

"Leave it to a limited mind like yours to try to suggest that Luna's hatred of Sable comes from her physical appearance," Goldust snarled. "First of all, Luna is far more beautiful than Sable without even trying to be. But Luna doesn't care about that. She, like I, comes from a strong wrestling tradition. She has worked her way to the top by beating everyone who stood in her way. Sable, on the other hand, rode the coattails of a mediocre former boxer and flashed her body to get attention. Sorry, dear Sable. Substance always rises above flash."

"She's the one who tries to be the Barbie doll," Luna added. "I was

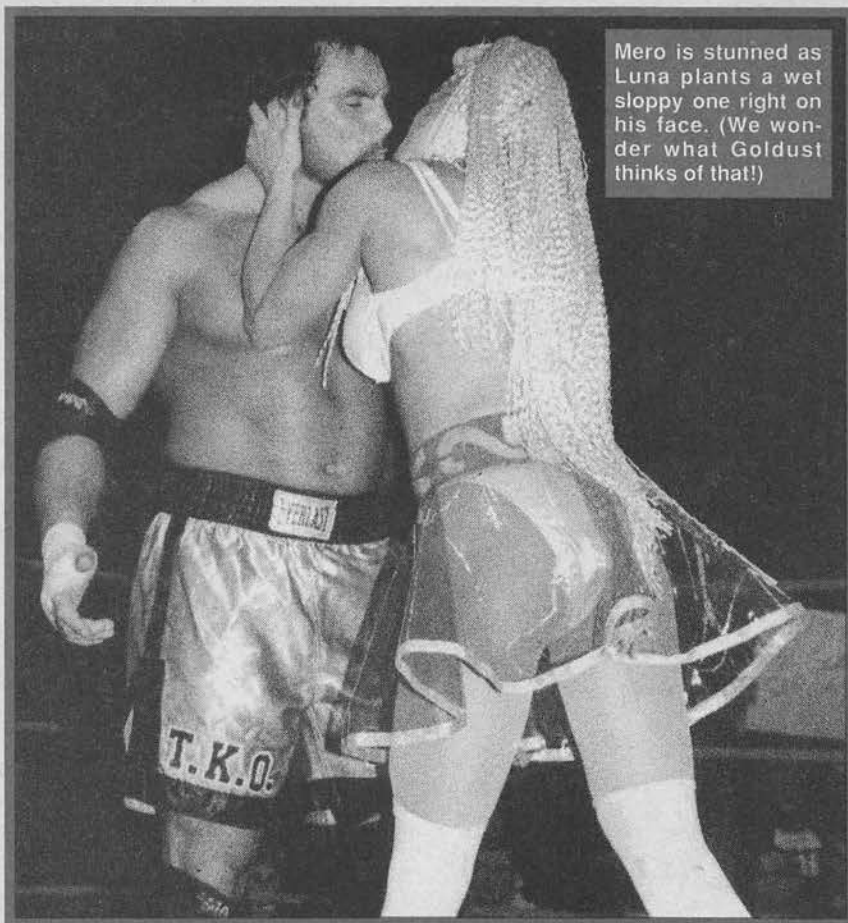


A swift kick to the gut (above) has Luna on the defensive (right), proving that Sable is a lot more than just a pretty face and a beautiful body.

If the shell-shocked cashier's story is to be believed, it was yet another instance of Luna and Goldust taking some time off for rest and relaxation and letting business get in the way of their pleasure.

"I can't help it," Luna gurgled. "Whenever I see all of that blush and lipstick and mascara, all of that prissy girly garbage, it makes me think of that piece of trash Sable. That cow ladles all of that junk over her bony face to try to make all the men think she's pretty. Awwwww, what a living dolly! She makes me wanna puke!"





Mero is stunned as Luna plants a wet sloppy one right on his face. (We wonder what Goldust thinks of that!)

outfits she's so proud of," Luna speculated. "Then again, she'd probably enjoy the exposure. It would probably be more fitting if I just came out and covered her dirty body in a garbage bag."

"This is a real woman, right here," Goldust beamed.

Sable's not about to let Luna's trash talk disturb her, though.

"I spend just as much time in the gym as she does," Sable countered. "I respect the Vachon family and I respect Luna's heritage. Does that mean she scares me? No way. So she painted my face. I stood in the ring and called her out and she hid behind her man, or whatever Goldust is these days. Luna fears Sable."

The slings and arrows have been unleashed. Calls from harried cashiers seem to indicate that Luna may have another makeover planned for Sable. Meanwhile, Sable's increased confidence seems to indicate that she's not about to back down soon.

Forget about Goldust and Marc Mero. The hottest feud in the WWF involves the women at their sides.

Don't expect them to make up any time soon. □

only helping her look the part when I gave her some makeup pointers."

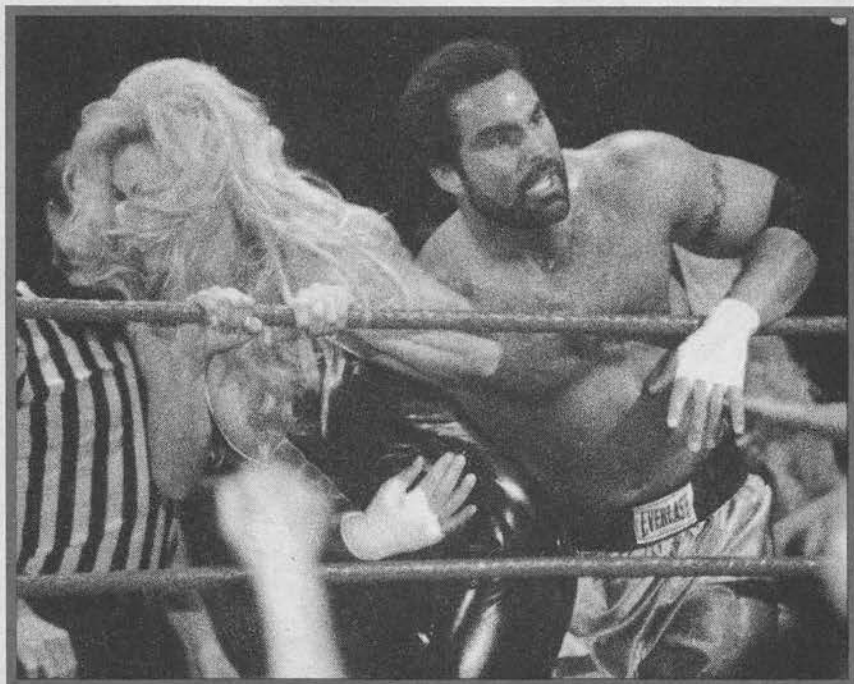
Sable, of course, sees things another way.

"Whether she's jealous of me or not, I know she's afraid of me," Sable responded. "I have called her out, one-on-one, at arenas around the country, and she has yet to take me up on a match. She's tough, though, when I'm handcuffed to a ringpost."

Sable certainly talks tough, and she has proven herself capable against Luna on a few occasions. She did go on to execute a "TKO" on Luna and pin her during a mixed tag team match at WrestleMania. However, Luna is a dangerous adversary. She came within a hair's breadth of winning the WWF Women's championship in matches against Madusa (Alundra Blayze) Miceli. She will do anything in her power to injure and humiliate whomever stands in her way. In fact, the ersatz makeover may have only been the first clash

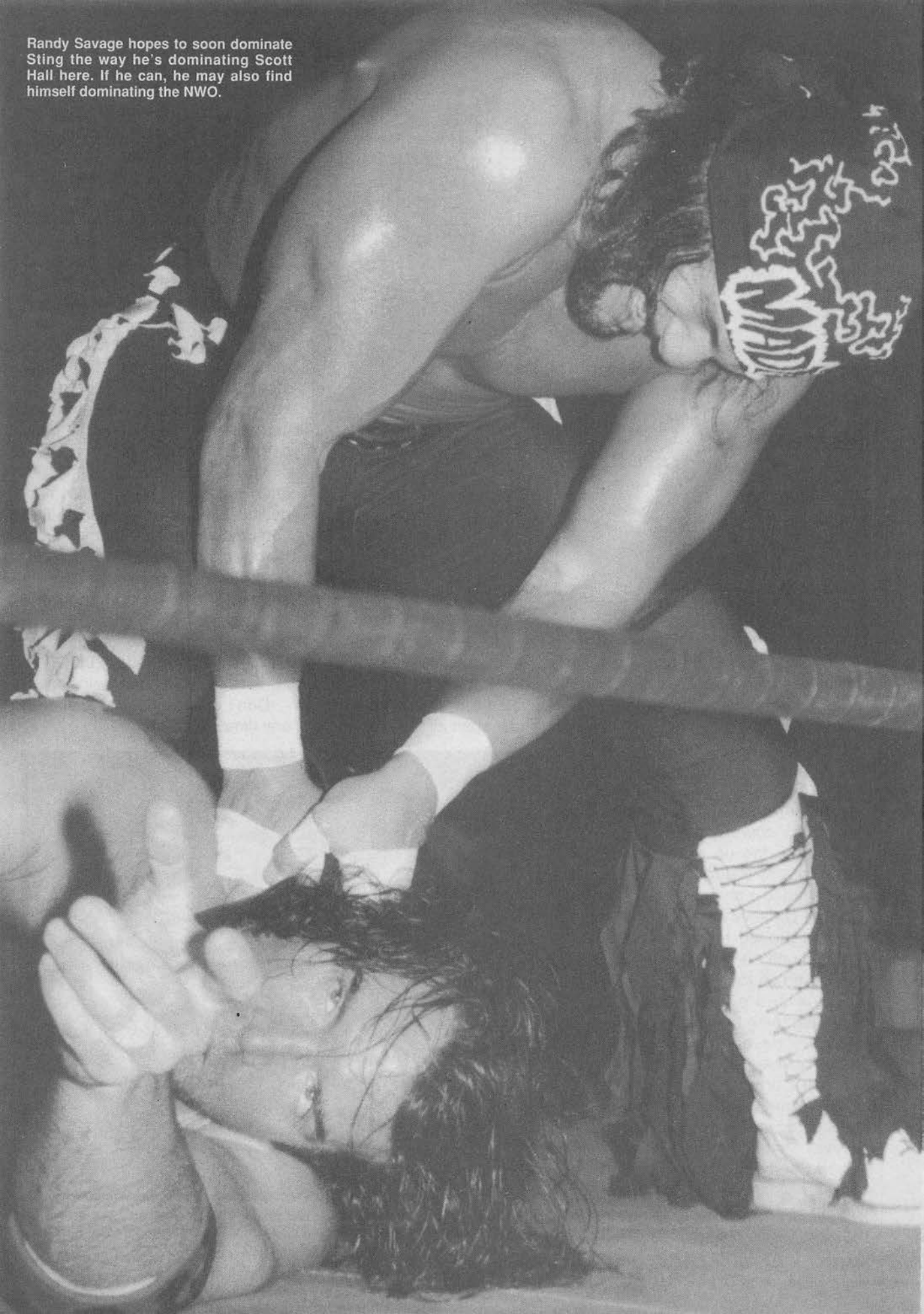
in a longer, full-scale assault on Sable.

"Maybe the next time I handcuff her, I'll tear apart all of those trashy



Mero is quick to come to Sable's rescue, and he might need to do so quite a bit in the near future: The Luna-Sable war is heating up swiftly! Luna isn't about to let it die.

Randy Savage hopes to soon dominate Sting the way he's dominating Scott Hall here. If he can, he may also find himself dominating the NWO.



SAVAGE WORLD (DIS)ORDER

Is Anyone Macho Enough To Stop The Madness?

Randy Savage is on a mission of madness: capture the WCW World title. If he does, though, it could mean the end of the NWO. And nobody—not even Hulk Hogan—may be able to stop him!

By Dan Murphy

SOME MEN ARE born leaders. They rise to the top of their respective fields, capturing the respect and admiration of their peers along the way. Others flock to them; enemies grudgingly pay them their respect.

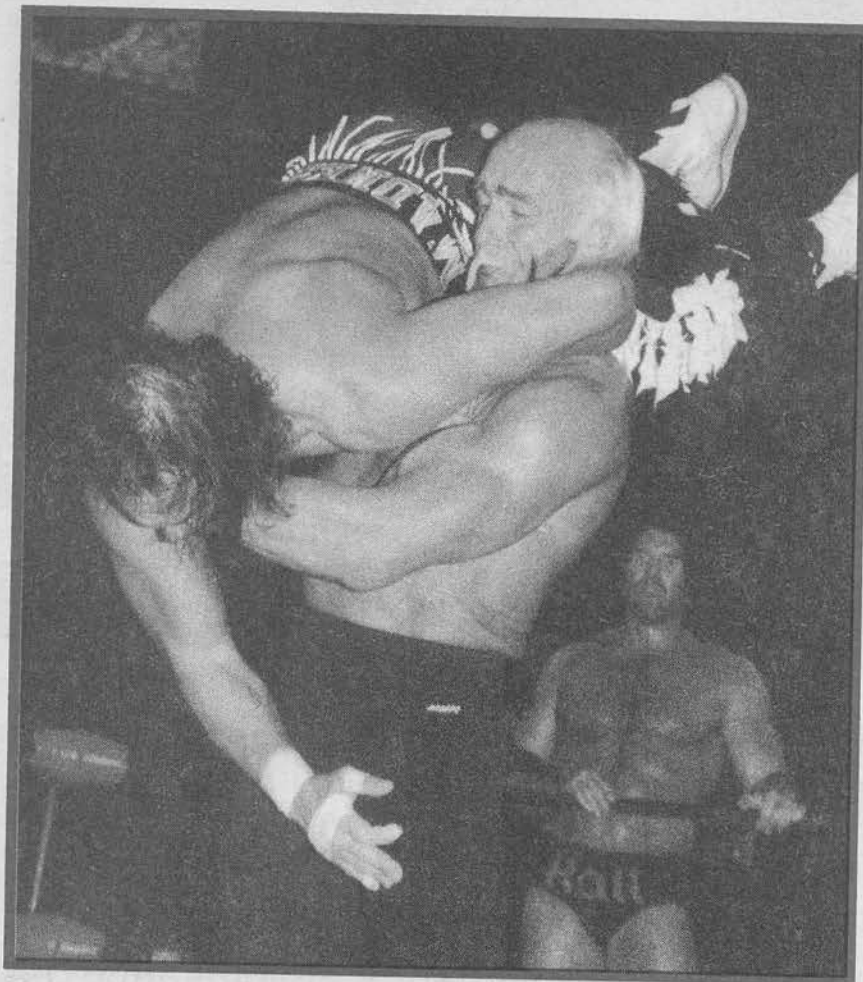
Other men are born psychopaths. They are loud and boisterous, showing time and time again their willingness to stab others in the back.

Randy Savage is both a born leader and a born psychopath. Which makes him a lot of things—including the biggest threat the NWO has ever had to face.

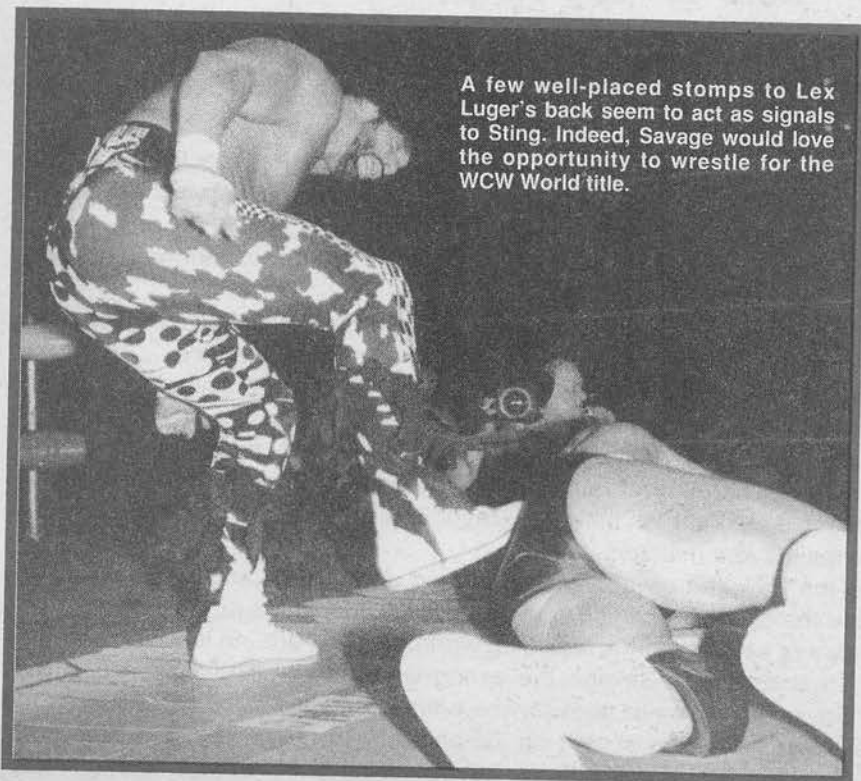
Despite rumors of infighting and ego clashes, the NWO has continued to grow and to dominate WCW. Sure, Hollywood Hogan may have dropped the WCW World title to Sting, but that loss has barely slowed the NWO, and it certainly hasn't quieted Hogan. Bret Hart, Lex Luger, and Rick Steiner win their share of matches against the NWO, but they have yet to break the organization apart. The NWO continues to thrive and to receive main event matches.

Yet despite the NWO's outward arrogance and dominance, sources close to the NWO admit that the Savage situation could potentially cripple the organization.

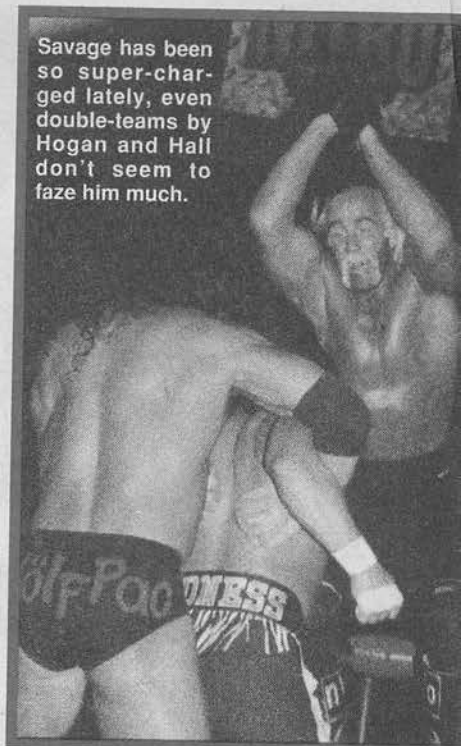
"Hogan is always saying that the wrestling world revolves around him, and I can tell you for a fact that that rubs Savage the wrong way," former NWO associate Nick Patrick said. "Savage has won titles everywhere he's been, including two WCW World titles, and he doesn't think he should be lumped in with guys like Scott Hall, Scott Norton, Buff Bagwell, and Brian Adams, guys who have never won a major title."



Hollywood Hulk Hogan scoops the "Macho Man" up for a slam. In the scheme of the NWO's future, Savage may be Hogan's biggest threat.



A few well-placed stomps to Lex Luger's back seem to act as signals to Sting. Indeed, Savage would love the opportunity to wrestle for the WCW World title.



Savage has been so super-charged lately, even double-teams by Hogan and Hall don't seem to faze him much.

Savage thinks he should be the real leader of the NWO—and certain members of the NWO agree with him."

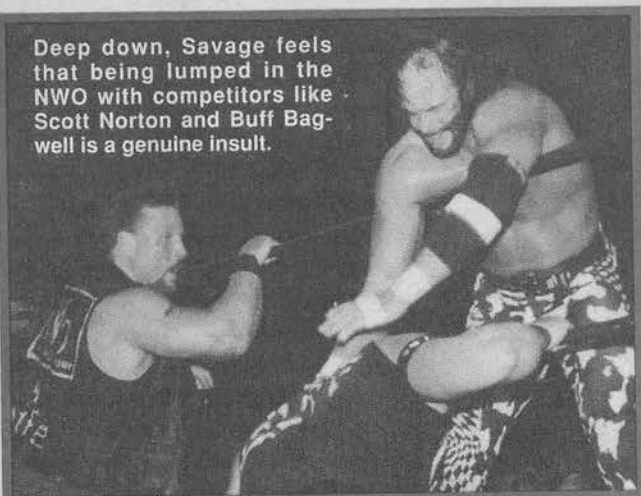
Randy Savage has been wrestling for more than two decades, and he has more experience in the ring than Hogan. Hollywood has won five WWF World titles and three WCW titles, but Savage—with a pair from each federation—probably made more total title defenses than Hogan did. Plus, Savage never considered leaving the squared circle for a career in Hollywood. Savage has paid his dues in the ring and has bounced back for more.

All of which has earned him a lot of respect throughout the sport—more respect, perhaps, than Hogan commands. Outwardly, most of the NWO has sided with Hogan in his dispute with Savage. Still, Savage has very close friends among NWO wrestlers, some of whom will likely be willing to side with him over Hogan.

So what does all of this mean?

"What we have here is, really, two men who have different ideas about what direction the NWO should move in," Patrick explained.

Deep down, Savage feels that being lumped in the NWO with competitors like Scott Norton and Buff Bagwell is a genuine insult.



"Hogan just wants to surround himself with thugs and yes-men who will help him regain, and retain, the World title. Savage wants the NWO to go all out and just win every belt in WCW, leaving a wake of destruction behind."

Kevin Nash has already gone public with his differences with Hogan, noting that no one is "pulling his strings" anymore. Others have also become fed up with Hogan's whining and posturing and are clamoring for title shots. They know that siding with Savage could quickly put championship gold around their waists.

"You know, all the time I came out and said we had to step up and take the NWO apart, the last person I would have expected to do it would have been Randy Savage, but that's just what he's doing," Lex Luger cracked. "He may think that what he's doing will save the NWO, but once the infighting begins, that will be the end of that little mob scene."

With Sting in possession of the WCW title belt, Hogan has more or less looked past his matches with Savage, instead keeping his eye on future title bouts. Savage became even more incensed when he saw Hogan was looking at him as a steppingstone to a rematch with Sting. When Sting became involved in Savage's bout with Hogan at Uncensored, it frustrated Savage even more, causing him to walk out of the steel-

enclosed ring.

Now Savage has his sights set on the WCW World title. If he is able to beat Sting, he could use that as justification to become the new leader of the NWO. He will have done what

Hogan couldn't: cleanly pin Sting's shoulders to the mat for a three-count.

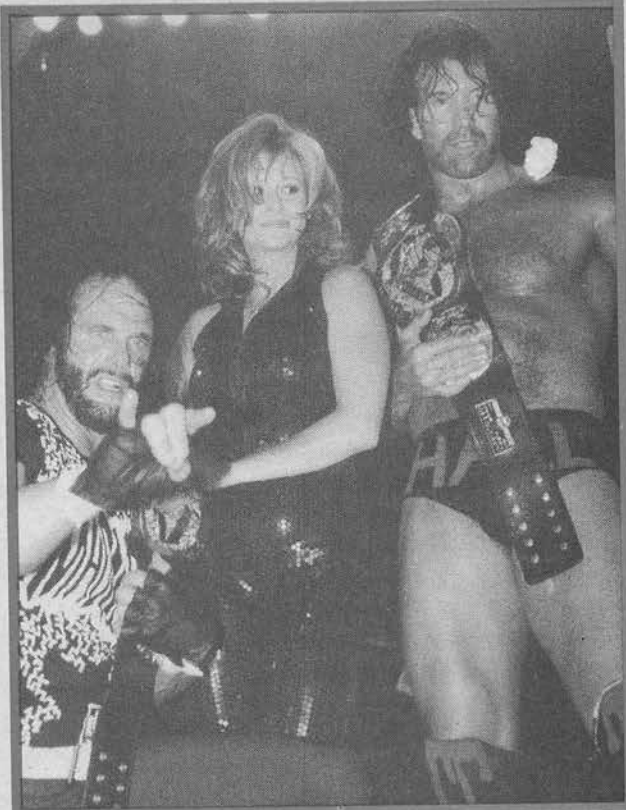
But if Savage is successful in his quest, would he be as successful leading the NWO? Savage has gone through most of his career as a loner. His alliances have been temporary. He has also proven to fly off the handle whenever he felt someone was getting too close to his manager, the lovely Elizabeth.

In short, is he more leader or psychopath?

"I'll tell you what I am," Savage snapped. "I'm a wrestler, one of the best of all-time. I'm not the star of a bunch of B-grade kiddie movies. I'm not a whining shell of my former self, either. Let Hogan have the leadership of the NWO. I'm more concerned with regaining the World title."

That's the type of attitude that has won Savage favor within the NWO. It's also the attitude that has made him some powerful enemies.

"What sets the NWO apart from everyone else is that we have been



If Savage (and Elizabeth) were to make a move to rule the NWO, would Hall stand by their side? He might!

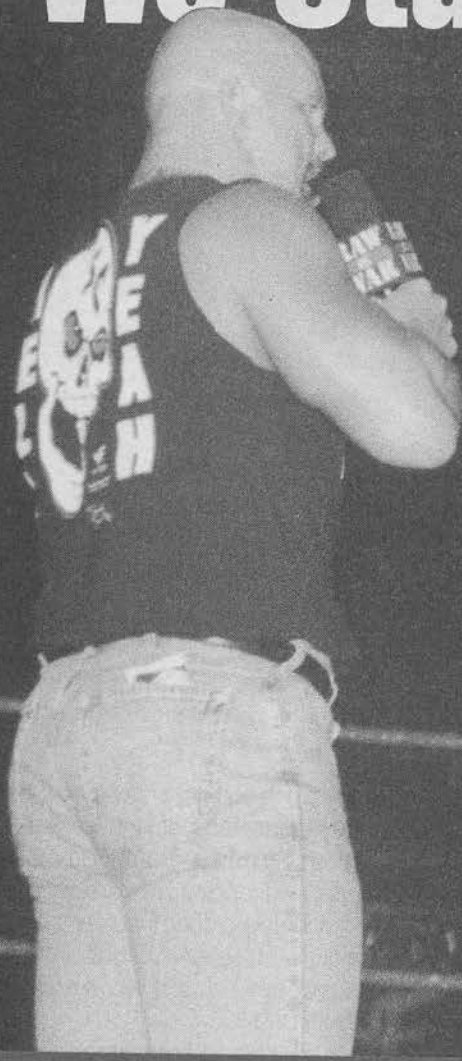
able to work together and to get stronger in the face of unbelievable pressures," Konnan said. "Savage has cracked under the pressure. He's not being a team player now, and there's no reason to believe he would become one if he were to lead the NWO."

For Savage to truly challenge Hogan's authority, he must beat Sting to win the World title, which is no small feat. But if Savage can win that belt, it may be the *coup de grace* for the NWO.

"I know there are some people who are loyal to Hogan, while others are loyal to Savage, and still others are only loyal to themselves and ambivalent right now," Patrick said. "If Savage were to win the belt and battle lines were drawn, I guarantee that would be the end of the NWO ... and very possibly the beginning of a new era of domination for Savage."

For that reason, Hogan doesn't care if Savage is a leader or a psychopath. He just doesn't want to see him as a champion. □

We Stand Behind Ya,



When Austin called out Vince McMahon on April 13, he gave the WWF owner very little choice but to agree to a match with him later in the evening (opposite page, below right). McMahon has been far, far too lenient with his federation's most popular star.



By Dan Murphy

STEVE AUSTIN IS the hottest property in the WWF. He has fought back from a serious injury, battled unbelievable odds, and achieved his dream of becoming WWF World champion. Fans everywhere wear his T-shirts and scream his name. He has taken Beatlemania, Hulkamania, and virtually every other kind of mania, wrapped them all together, and sealed them with a big "Hell, yeah!"

He is arguably the most popular WWF wrestler since Hulk Hogan was in his prime.

And it's about time someone

gives him a pink slip.

"Steve Austin fired? That's ludicrous!" you might exclaim.

"Austin has singlehandedly saved the WWF in its war with WCW! He's the man!"

"Austin is one of the most exciting wrestlers in the world—and he's the WWF World champion to boot."

To all of which we say the following: Good point, touche, and you're right.

But indulge us while we explain.

Austin has broken just about every rule there is in the WWF. He has physically assaulted referees, broadcasters, WWF Commissioner Sgt. Slaughter, and even

WWF head Vince McMahon (more than once!). On April 13, he forced McMahon to wrestle him!

He also besmirched one of wrestling's top prizes by callously tossing the Intercontinental title belt into a river. His interviews alone would have him banned from most federations.

And yet the WWF has gone out of its way to protect Austin.

Put it this way: How long do you think *you* would last if you flipped off your boss, asked your co-workers to scream "Hell, yeah!" if they wanted to see you kick the stuffing out of that same boss, and then proceeded to do so?

You sure wouldn't be named

Vince:



IT'S TIME TO FIRE AUSTIN!

"Stone-Cold" Steve Austin is one of the most popular wrestlers the WWF has ever known. He's the World champion, the symbol of success and achievement, a man at the top of his sport. Which is precisely why he *must* be fired

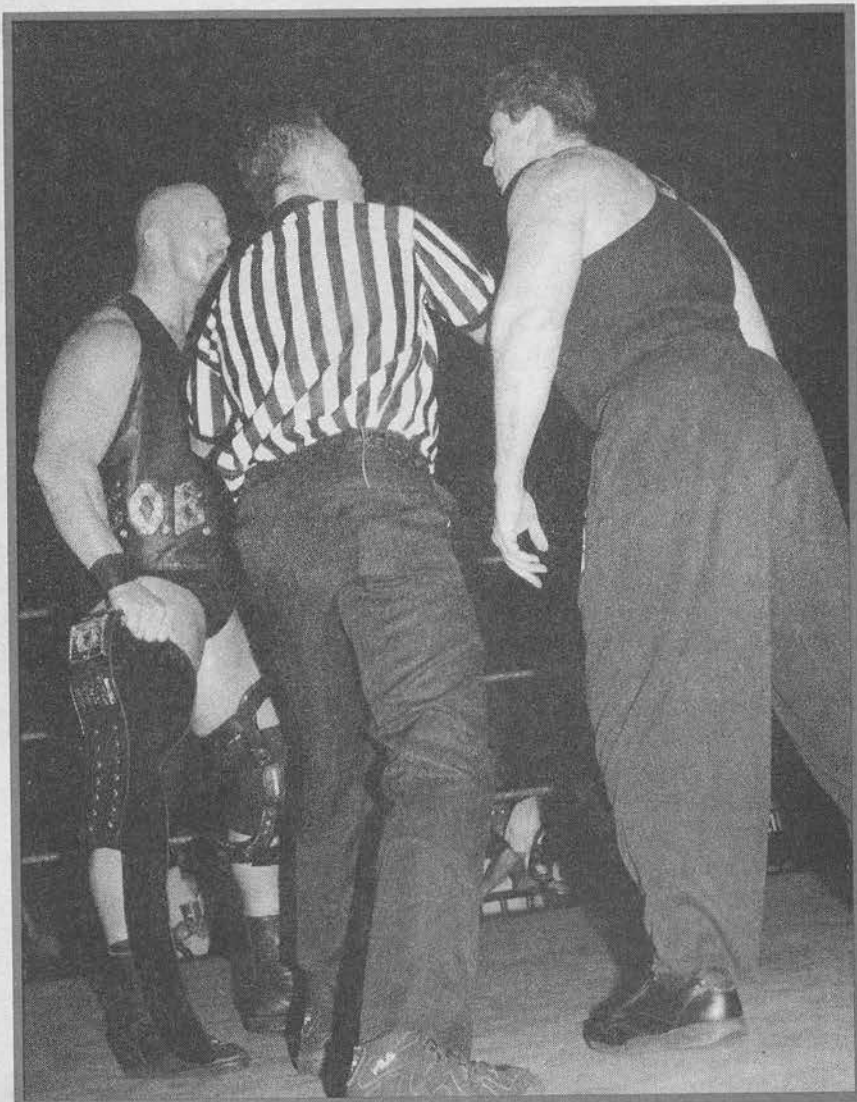
Employee of the Month.

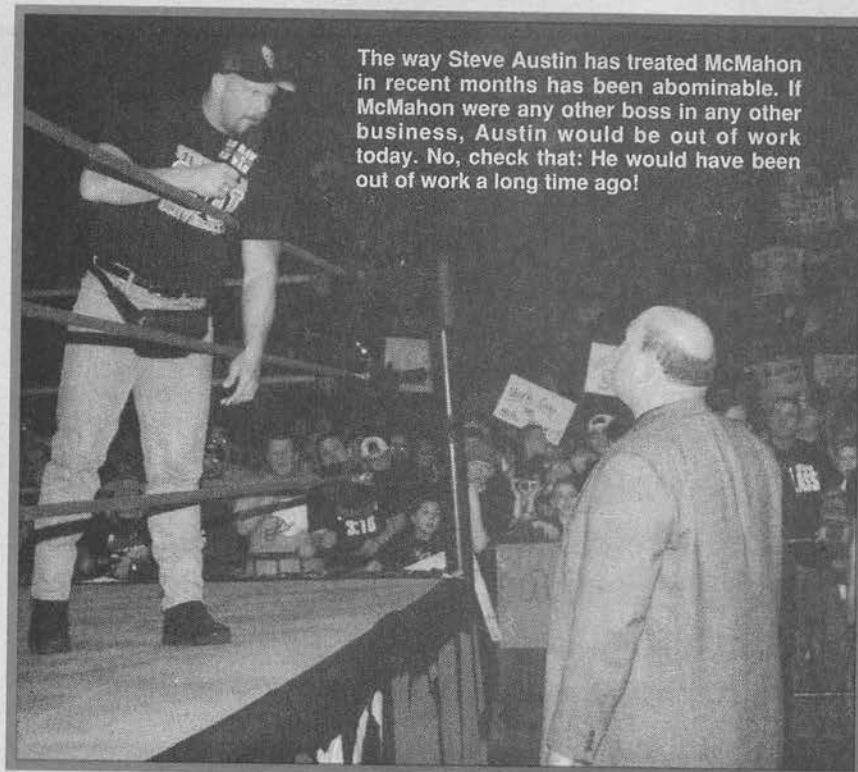
Why should wrestling be any different?

McMahon has been as lenient as possible with Austin. When Austin was piledriven into paralysis by Owen Hart, McMahon pleaded with him to stay out of the ring long enough to recuperate. When Austin recovered, he gave him an immediate rematch for the I-C strap.

And what did "Stone-Cold" do? A month after he won it, when McMahon demanded he defend it against Rocky Maivia, he threw the belt off a bridge! How's that for gratitude?

"McMahon and Slaughter are





The way Steve Austin has treated McMahon in recent months has been abominable. If McMahon were any other boss in any other business, Austin would be out of work today. No, check that: He would have been out of work a long time ago!

has disavowed all responsibility for his actions. He has become the spokesman for the WWF by bullying everyone around him. For goodness sake, when McMahon simply asked him to learn to adapt now that he is WWF champion, he gave him a "Stone-Cold stunner." Even after McMahon had him arrested, Austin refused to change his ways.

Canning Austin at the height of his career will serve notice to everyone in wrestling: If you're going to wrestle in the WWF, you're going to follow the rules. No man is above the law.

Maybe McMahon's bold move would serve as an example to J.J. Dillon and the WCW Executive Committee. Maybe Vince's example could usher in a new era of clean wrestling and matches without outside interference.

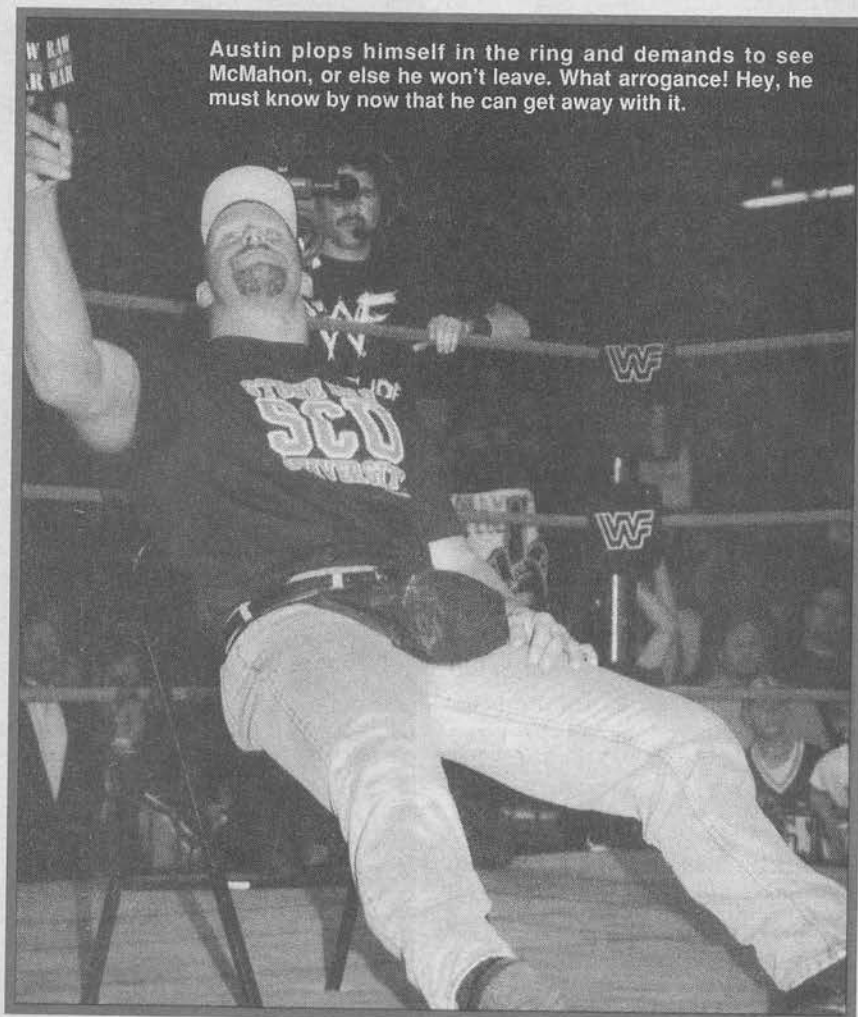
always talking about how they're going to clean up the WWF. Everyone knows that's a joke," Hunter Hearst Helmsley recently told *THE WRESTLER*. "Oooh, Sarge and Vinnie Mac are going to come down hard now! Right. Austin still does whatever he wants and all he gets are threats. Yeah, it's a real crackdown, isn't it?"

With Austin having made it to the top by not following any rules, all the other wrestlers in the WWF have, in essence, been given free reign to do as they please.

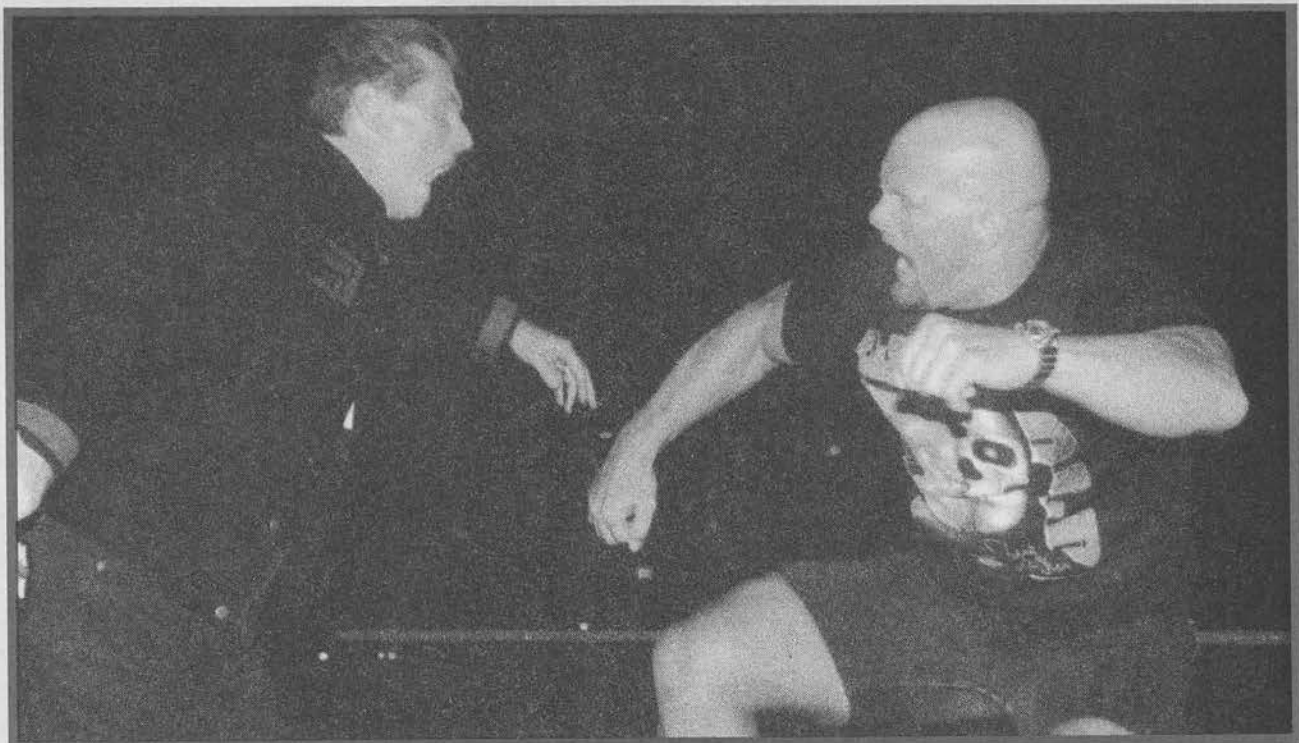
Well, you might think, wouldn't it be exciting to see a whole federation full of guys going all-out, damning the consequences, and doing what they please?

Sure, if you like a lot of disqualifications, injuries, and wrestlers more interested in kicking referees than learning new moves. Austin has shown the world that you can forget years of scientific mastery and make a run for the top with a lot of tough guy tactics and a lot of swearing.

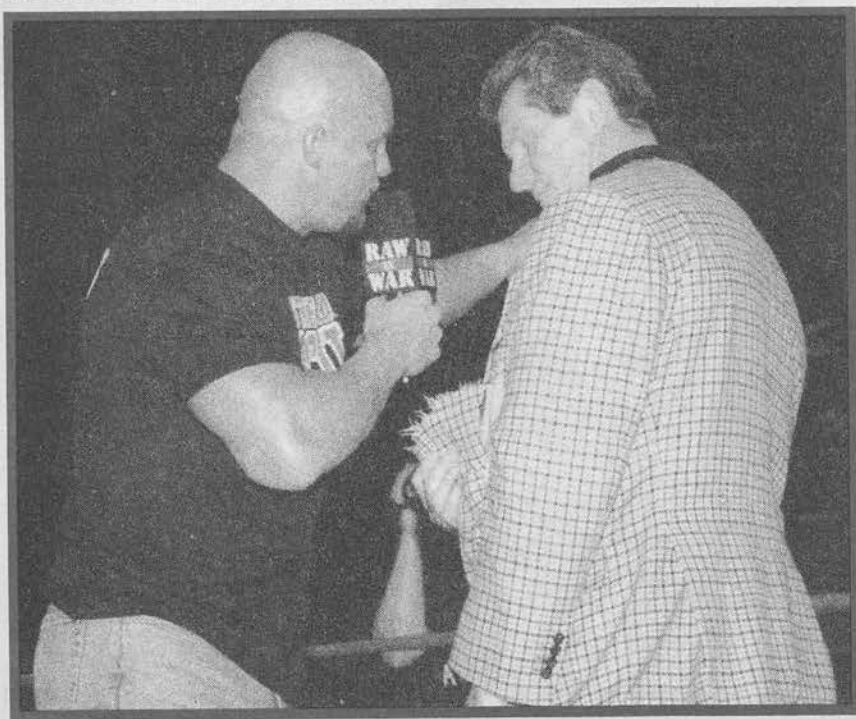
It's gone on long enough. Every ultimatum that McMahon has issued has been ignored. Austin



Austin plops himself in the ring and demands to see McMahon, or else he won't leave. What arrogance! Hey, he must know by now that he can get away with it.



"Hey, boss, take this!" Incredible! How can a man get away with *repeatedly* assaulting his employer? (above) McMahon ought to set an example for the entire sport and set Austin out on the street for his heinous actions (below).



Maybe that's asking too much. But it's a start.

"I don't think there are too many people who would blame Vince if he did fire Austin," WWF commentator Jim Ross said. "When Latrell Sprewell choked P.J. Carlesimo, he was disciplined by the NBA and vil-

fied by both fans and the press. But when Austin repeatedly knocks his superiors unconscious, he gets cheered like he's the greatest wrestler of all-time. I may disagree with McMahon a lot, but he'd certainly be justified in firing Austin."

An informal poll of WWF

wrestlers yielded the same answer, but none, other than a few of Austin's arch-enemies, would speak on the record. The consensus was that if Austin were to be released from his contract, there would be very few tears shed in the locker room.

And now, we'd like to close by speaking directly to Vince McMahon:

Vince, you've taken a lot of heat in the past several months. By firing Austin, you will silence a lot of your critics. You will send a very clear message to everyone who draws a paycheck from you. You will take the first step in restoring much-needed sanity to the WWF. It has gone on too long.

The wrestling world is watching how you handle this situation, McMahon. It's time for you to lay down the law, once and for all. If Austin strays from the straight-and-narrow, be it by attacking an official (or you), swearing during an interview, or interfering in someone else's match, let him go once and for all.

It won't be popular, but the right thing rarely is. We're behind you, Vince. All the way. □

THE ICEMAN



Has Pressure Put The Deep Freeze On Dean Malenko's Career?

By Dan Murphy

"Every day's an endless stream of cigarettes and magazines. And each town looks the same to me, the movies and the factories, and every stranger's face I see reminds me that I long to be homeward bound.

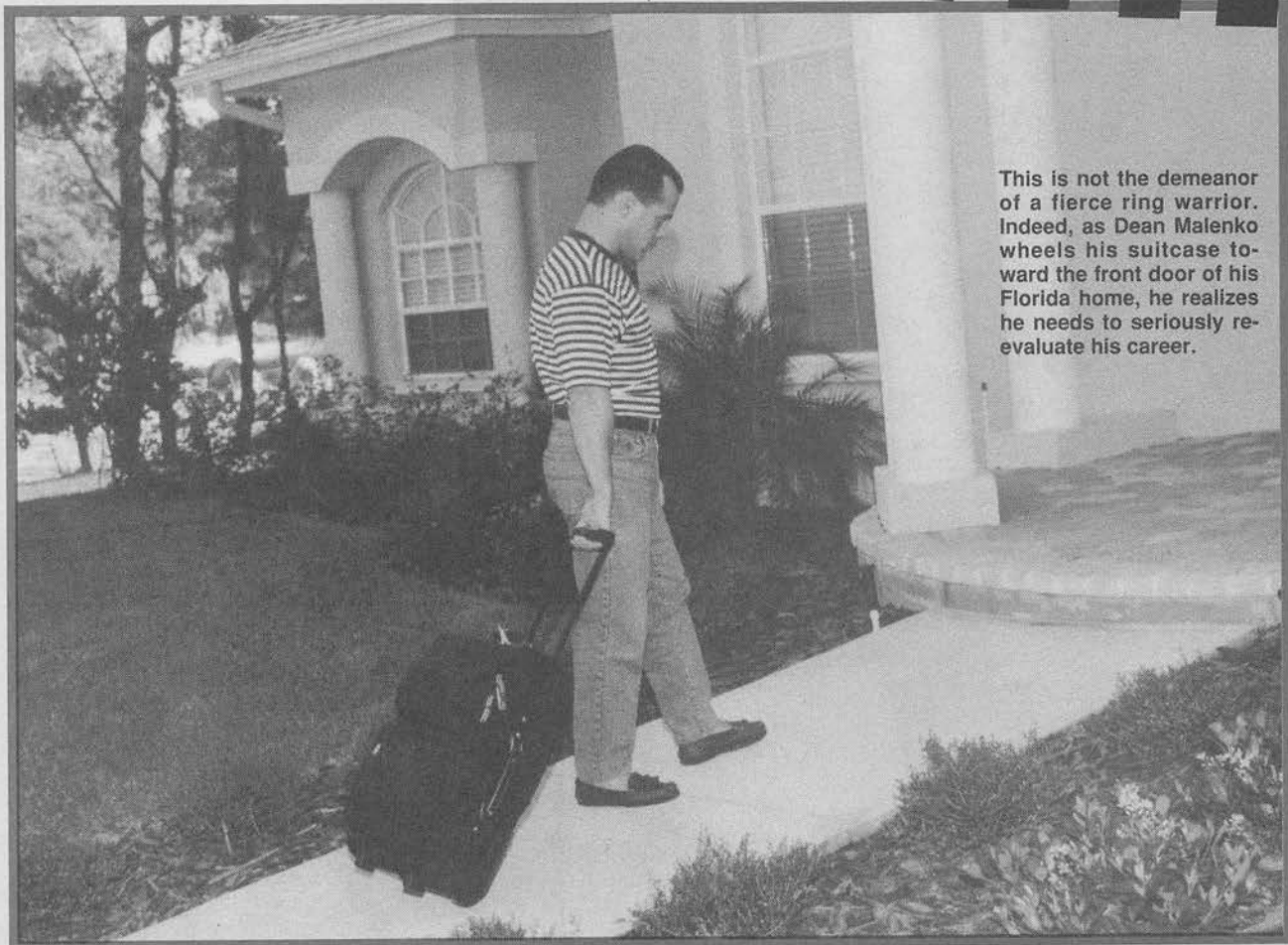
I wish I was homeward bound."

—Paul Simon

PHOTOS BY BILL OTTEN

DEAN MALENKO HAS had his share of success in his career. What an understatement, right? He is a former ECW tag team champion with Chris Benoit. He is a two-time former ECW TV champion. He is a three-time former WCW cruiserweight

CRA~~C~~CKETH



This is not the demeanor of a fierce ring warrior. Indeed, as Dean Malenko wheels his suitcase toward the front door of his Florida home, he realizes he needs to seriously re-evaluate his career.

When the going gets tough, the tough ... run home? Well, maybe if they're not so tough. Or maybe, as in the case of Dean Malenko, the pressure is just too much

champion. He is a former WCW U.S. champ. And he was ranked first in the 1997 *"Pro Wrestling Illustrated 500."*

Sure, Malenko has suffered losses, but the "Iceman" has always managed to rebound from defeat to make another run at glory. Still, Malenko's Uncensored loss to Chris Jericho was enough to shake him to the core.

"You know your career is in a whole heap of trouble when Gene

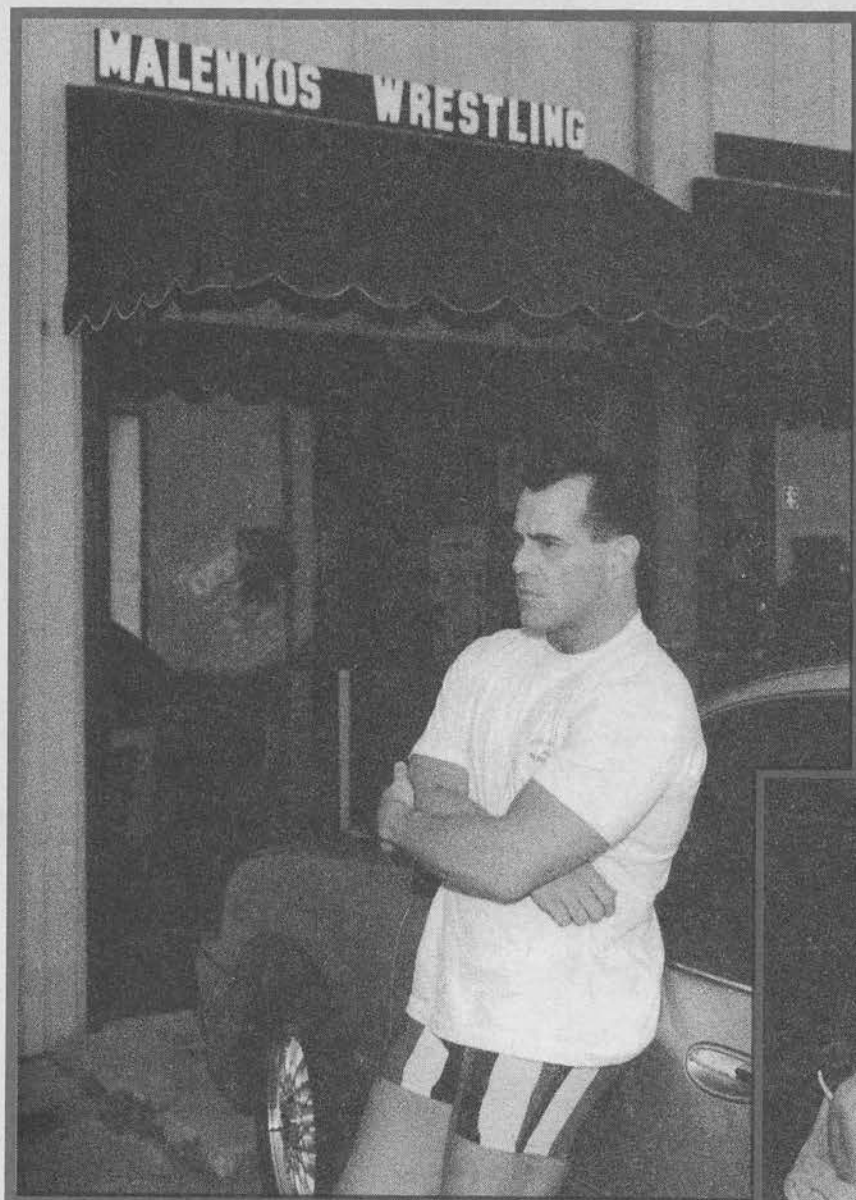
Okerlund calls you a loser," Jericho giggled after the bout. "The worst part is that Okerlund was on the mark with what he said. Malenko didn't even belong in the ring with me. He should go home and stay there."

Malenko wrestled a solid match against Jericho, but Jericho was able to procure a submission win with his "Lion Tamer." It was a gallant effort, but a Malenko loss nonetheless.

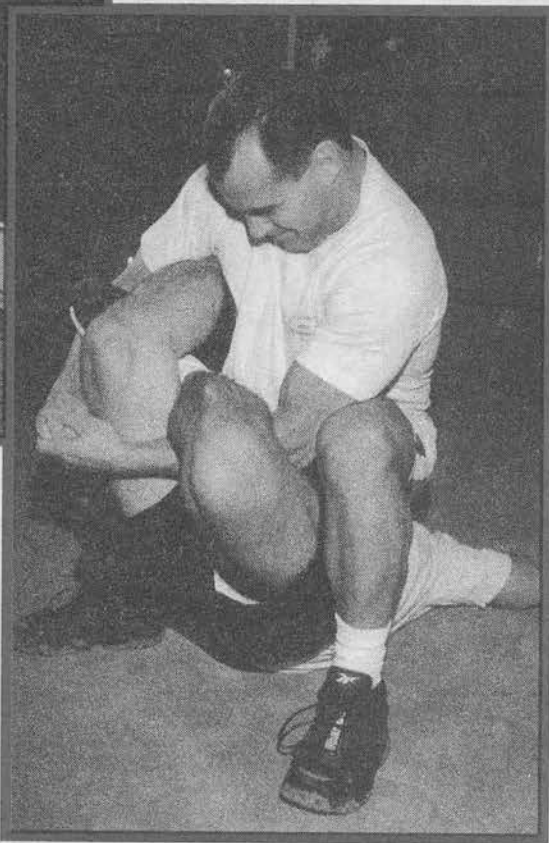
The "Man Of 1,000 Holds" was virtually speechless after the match. When Okerlund asked him where he was headed after yet another pay-per-view loss (his fourth in a row), Malenko (who was heavily favored against the younger Jericho) would only say one word.

"Home."

What made the 17-year veteran turn his back on the squared circle? Will he jump to the WWF?



At his wrestling school (above), Malenko still works with students and shows how his famous Texas cloverleaf is properly applied (right), but he's just not sure that his own career is working right now.



Some called it refreshing to see a *wrestler* in the top spot instead of a brawler or an lesser-skilled musclem. Initially, Malenko was honored by the recognition; in the long run, though, he came to resent it.

"I'm not the type of guy who comes out and starts running my mouth. I get paid to do my talking in the ring, and that's what I do," he explained. "Since I'm pretty quiet and since I don't come jumping out of the rafters, people overlooked me. When I was rated number one, it's like all of a sudden I was wrestling with a big target on my chest."

And the pressure wasn't limited to Malenko's in-ring opponents. He became *persona non grata* in the locker room. Those who didn't know him began to mistake his

Return to ECW? Turn his back on the fans? Sign with a manager?

Will he retire? And if so, why?

Those were the questions on the minds of a lot of fans in the days following that pay-per-view.

"I've had a lot on my mind over the past year or so," Malenko admitted in an interview with *THE WRESTLER*. "I'm not in the habit of blaming anyone but myself when things go wrong, and I'm not going to start making excuses now. I will admit, though, that my life's been a lot more complicated since I started winning titles in WCW, and

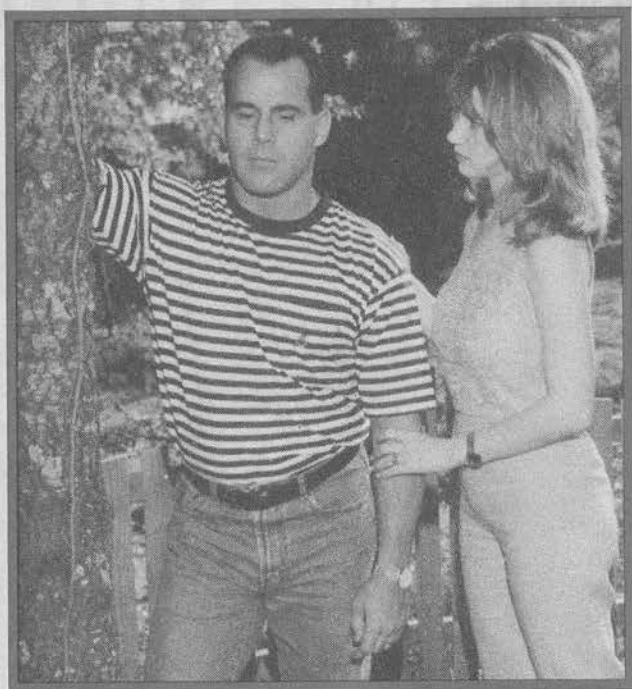
getting ranked number one in the 'PWI 500' probably didn't help."

Malenko's high rating was not without its share of controversy. It was a decision that divided the staff of *PWI* and its sister magazines. It's not that people thought Malenko was a bad wrestler. It was just that many people felt he hadn't proven himself to be the top man in wrestling.

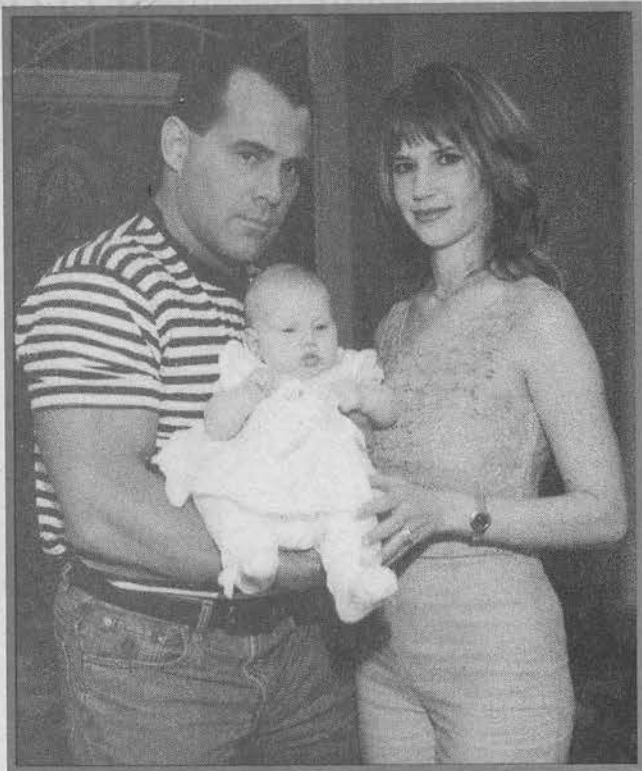
Many traditionalists, however, were happy with Malenko's rating.

quiet demeanor as arrogance. Those who did know him wanted to beat him worse than ever. Title or no title, beating Dean Malenko now could make a young wrestler's career.

Jericho admitted that Malenko's



Malenko is now spending time at home with his wife, Julie (above), and their infant daughter, Larissa (right). But what does he need to get his career moving in the right direction again?



"PWI 500" ranking played a major role in his preparation for the match at Uncensored.

"As cruiserweight champion, obviously I'm going to give my all against all contenders to keep my title, but I got a little sick of hearing about how great Malenko is supposed to be," Jericho said. "I'm taller than him, I'm younger than him, I'm stronger than him, and I'm a champion. He's not. Still, everyone was predicting that he'd beat me. I wanted to stick it to him in the worst way. Of course, to the delight of all my Jerichoholics, I did."

The pressure of being recognized as the best in the world wasn't the only thing that hurt Malenko. At 5'9" and 216 pounds, Malenko knows his career would be best served by a chase for the cruiserweight strap, yet he also has designs on chasing heavyweight titles. Rather than set his sights on one particular title, though, Malenko continued to accept all challenges. He has been running on a treadmill. The

loss to Jericho threw him off it.

"Chris Jericho is the antithesis of everything I stand for," Malenko said bitterly. "He's all show, all flash, and not nearly enough substance. When I got into the ring with him, I had no doubt in my mind that I'd walk out of the ring with the cruiserweight belt. When he beat me, it showed me just how far off base my career has gone. I don't know ... I've just lost

that edge that every great wrestler has, and I have to get it back."

So Malenko has done what anyone would do: He has gone home.

"I just needed some time off," Malenko explained. "I've got a wife and a baby that I don't see nearly enough, with all the travel I'm doing with WCW. I came home, I spent a lot of time at my training school, and I enjoyed my time with my family. It's helping me put things back in perspective."

But what about all the rumors? Will Malenko return to the ring? And if he does, where will it be? Will he return with a new name? Or form a new tag team? Or sign with a new manager?

"That's not what I'm all about," Malenko said definitively. "I didn't spend my life mastering all these holds to start taking shortcuts now. Once I get my batteries recharged, I'll be back in WCW."

"I also know that you'll be calling Dean Malenko a champion again very soon." □



Perhaps the pressure of being named number one in the 1997 "PWI 500" was just too much for Malenko to bear. He admits it did contribute to the problems he has had in WCW of late.

SUPER 8 TOURNAMENT LEAVES

"ALL YOU DOUBTERS CAN KISS MY

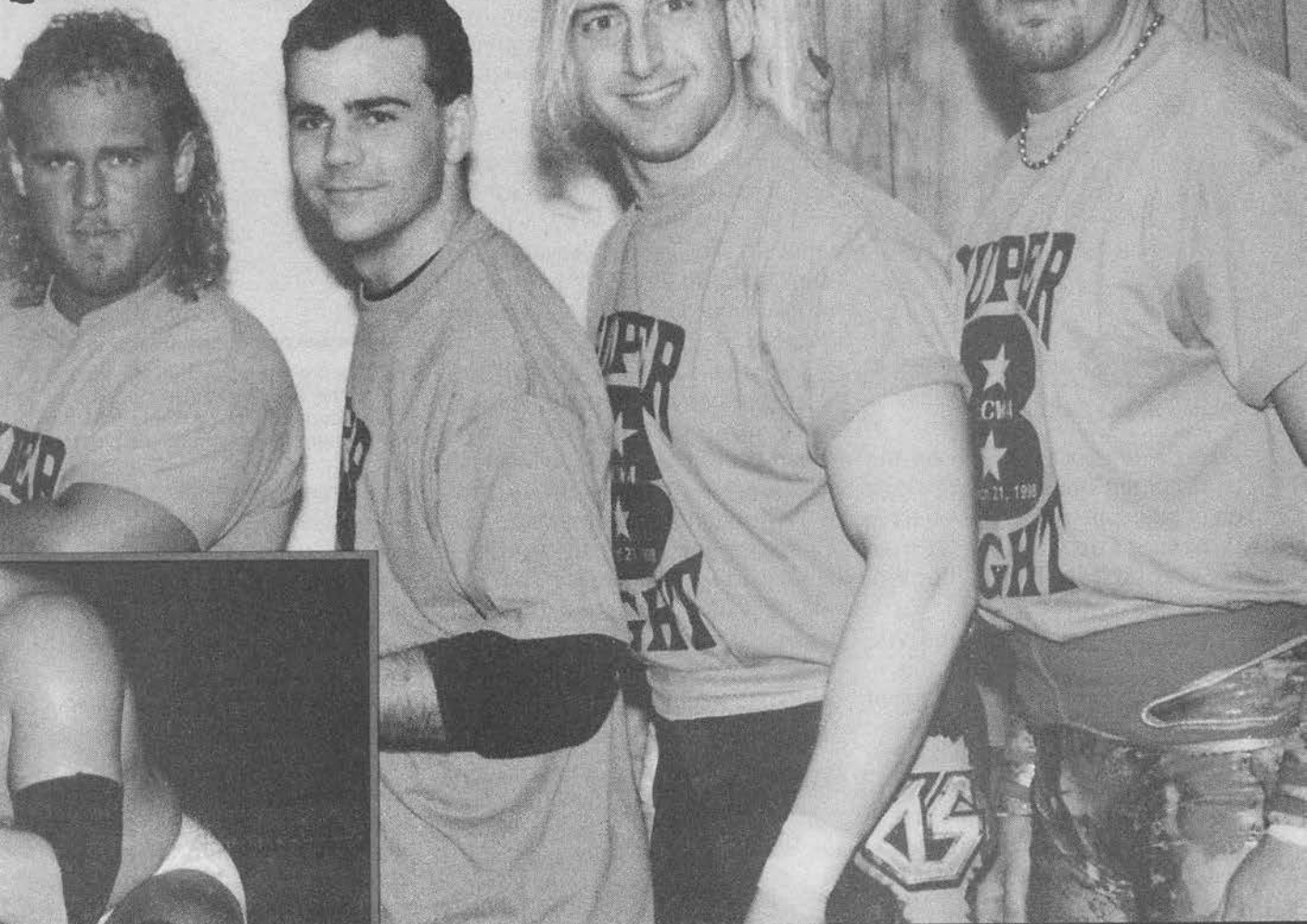
PHOTOS BY FRANK VITUCCI



With its second annual Super 8 Tournament, the Delaware-based ECWA presented one of its best cards ever. The fans might not have been happy with the final result, but they certainly weren't cheated out of action

DIAMOND GLIMMERING

[TROPHY]!"



"Kiss my trophy!" a riled up Lance Diamond said after winning the ECWA Super 8 Tournament (left). Earlier, the super eight of the Super 8 posed together (above). From opposite page, left to right: Diamond, Ace Darling, Reckless Youth, Mark Shrader, Scott Taylor, Mike Quackenbush, Devon Storm, and Inferno Kid.

By Dave Rosenbaum

IF YOU LIVE anywhere north of Wilmington, Delaware, or anywhere south of Wilmington, Delaware, or anywhere east or west of Wilmington, Delaware—basically anywhere but Wilmington, Delaware—chances are you don't know much about the East Coast Wrestling Association.

You've never seen its matches on TV. You've never seen its cards at the CoreStates Spectrum in Philadelphia or Madison Square Garden in New York.

That's because the ECWA has never held a card at the CoreStates Spectrum or Madison Square Garden. The ECWA holds its cards at a 800-seat gym in (where else?) Wilmington, Dela-



In the opening match of the Super 8, Darling upended Quackenbush, both figuratively and literally!

ware, a smoky little city on the banks of the Delaware River, right off of Interstate 95, a city you have to pass if you want to get from New York City to Washington, D.C.

That, friends, used to be Wilmington's claim to fame.

But a group of dedicated junior heavyweight wrestlers have tried to change all that. They'd like to change that road sign so it reads, "Welcome to Wilmington, Delaware, home of great, high-flying wrestling." And their tool in this endeavor was the ECWA Super 8 Tournament, a one-night event featuring eight of the finest junior heavyweights you'll find in North America.

"That's what this is all about," said Mike Quackenbush. "When you're an independent federation trying to get some attention, everybody's in it together. We all have to work as hard as we can to make promotions like the ECWA as successful as possible. That's why every one of us has to give 100 percent effort in the ring every time. There are no nights off here. Every match is like a title match."

On March 21, 1998, presenting exciting, high-quality, high-flying wrestling was not a problem for the ECWA.

The problem occurred in the area of fan relations. Enter Lance Diamond, this year's ECWA Super 8 Tournament champion, who celebrated his final match victory by berating the fans, insulting his supporters, and turning against his mentor and trainer, promoter Jim Kettner.

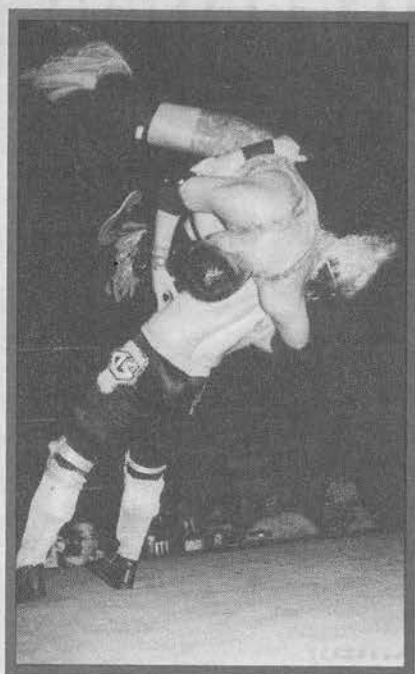
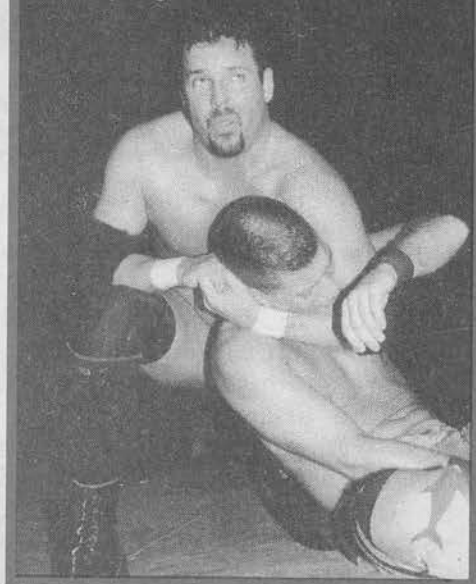
"I've had enough of this crap," Diamond said later. "Everybody's doubted me. Nobody thought I had what it takes. Well, I have what it takes, and I proved it by humiliating that fan's boy Inferno Kid. All you doubters can kiss my [trophy]!"

With that, Diamond grabbed the Super 8 trophy, stormed off, broke into the promoter's office, and found not Kettner, but The Master, the most evil manager in the ECWA, sitting in Kettner's chair. Diamond was happy to see him. He handed the trophy to The Master, who accepted it with a diabolical laugh.

So much for the ECWA reaching out to the fans.

Even so, from the opening bell

Diamond overcame Shrader in his first of three bouts of the evening. He didn't think he had a difficult match in the tourney. Right!



Storm controlled Inferno in the second bout of the evening, but Kid rallied to win the contest. He certainly had the crowd's support throughout the night.

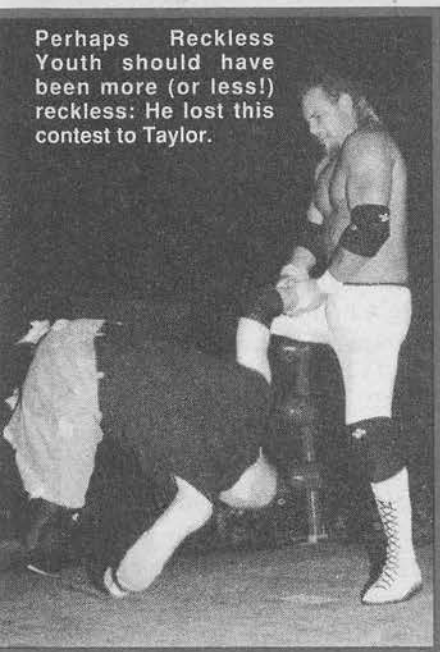
of the first quarterfinal match, the second annual Super 8 Tournament was memorable, and a great advertisement for this rising independent federation.

In what many felt was the best match of the tournament, Mike Quackenbush battled Ace Darling in a thrilling aerial show. Simultaneous dropkicks, armdrag take-downs, suplexes, and an atomic kneedrop by Quackenbush kept the crowd cheering. When Quackenbush hit Darling with a victory roll, the crowd rose to its feet in anticipation, but Darling rolled through it and pinned him.

The second match featured the return of Inferno Kid, who had been away from the ring for nearly a year while recovering from a torn ACL. The crowd exulted at Inferno Kid's entrance and roared through another thrilling match. Devon Storm was aggressive throughout, but Kid overcame a "Frankensteiner" and a power bomb to score the victory.

Diamond cruised through his first-round victory over Mark "The Shark" Shrader. The mo-

Perhaps Reckless Youth should have been more (or less!) reckless: He lost this contest to Taylor.



mentum-turning maneuver wasn't very scientific: Diamond kicked Shrader in the groin. With Shrader doubled over in pain, Diamond used his Northern Lights suplex and got the pin. The first round ended with Scott Taylor reversing an airplane spin by Reckless Youth for a pin.

Inferno Kid paid for his victory in the semifinals. Darling was a tough, ruthless competitor who spent most of the match working on Kid's knee. "I thought he was going to break my leg," Inferno Kid said later. "Just in that moment, I was thinking, *All those months of rehab. Everything I did to get back into the ring, it's going to be gone*



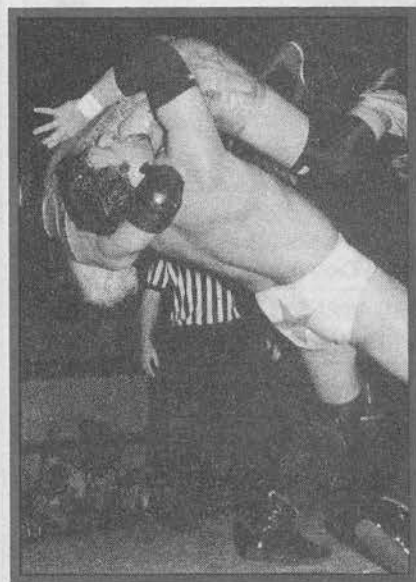
Inferno overcame an injured knee to score the second-round win over Darling, the previous year's winner.

with one match. But I had to expect my opponents to concentrate on the knee. It's a weakness, and I have to overcome it."

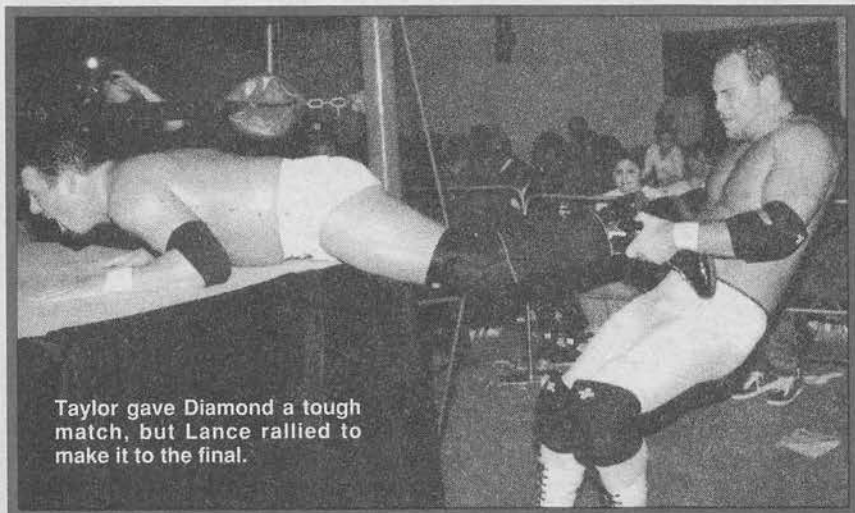
He did—in spectacular fashion—by overcoming a superkick and moving out of the way of a legdrop. Darling, the 1997 Super 8 champion, had made his only mistake of the match, and it cost him dearly. Kid scored the pin. Then, in a battle of DDTs, kneedrops, elbowdrops, and suplexes, Diamond got up first from a simulta-

neous pin situation to beat Taylor and reach the finals.

The final match, according to Diamond, "was never in doubt." Tell that to Inferno Kid. Tell that to the fans. Inferno, his knee throbbing with pain, limped into the ring. Kid and Diamond traded kicks and punches. Kid landed closed-fist blows to the head; a clothesline sent both wrestlers careening to the floor. Diamond worked ruthlessly on Kid's injured knee, stomping and twisting, doing everything he could to cripple him. The crowd roared, trying to keep Inferno in the match. Inferno responded with a DDT that



In the last bout of the Super 8, Diamond overcame Inferno to capture the victory and win the tournament. But he was clearly more angry than happy afterward.



Taylor gave Diamond a tough match, but Lance rallied to make it to the final.

sent Diamond flying head-first into a metal chair. Inferno followed with two near-falls, but Diamond wouldn't give in.

"I wasn't even *close* to losing," he boasted later.

And when Diamond executed his Northern Lights suplex, then reversed a back suplex into a pin, the crowd went dead silent.

"I can make anybody shut their damn mouths," Diamond said.

But on this night, the silence was temporary. The ECWA had taken a big step toward the big time. □

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YOUR LETTERS

(Continued from page 5)

did to Eric Bischoff was totally justified. Scott Hall stuck a foreign object in Bischoff's boot! After that happened, Bret had the right to do whatever he thought was necessary, including deck Bischoff. The NWO has been getting away with too much for too long. I'm glad Bret did what he did.

RAY FARRIS
Paducah, KY

JERICO-HOLIC

While I certainly dislike Chris Jericho's new crybaby attitude, I can understand why he engages in such irrational behavior. As Andy Rodriguez pointed out in his column ("Blindsided," May 1998), it is all for attention.

But unlike Rodriguez, who thinks Jericho should "keep plugging away" until someone notices his talent, I think Chris should get attention any way he can.

Jericho's antics do not befit a champion. But who really pays attention to the cruiserweight division? With Hogan, Savage, and Nash stealing all the thunder (no pun intended), how is Jericho supposed to get any attention? If you look at the fleeting success of Dean Malenko or Juventud Guerrera, you will see why Jericho

should make as much noise as he can right now. He is on top now, and there are no guarantees that he'll be there a week, a month, or a year from now. If he doesn't make a name for himself today, he may never get the chance again.

MARK BORCKY
Cleveland, OH

ECW! ECW!

After watching Living Dangerously, a thought came to me: When are we going to see the women of ECW wrestle each other? I would love to see a tag team match with Sunny, Francine, and Nicole Bass vs. Beulah, Chastity, and Jenna Jameson. Could you imagine that?

If you think ECW fans are out of control now, think of how they would react if they saw these six babes going at it. With all things being equal, I'd give the nod to Sunny's team in a wrestling match, but in a beauty contest, Jenna Jameson would be the undisputed champion.

GARY CIPOLA
Philadelphia, PA □

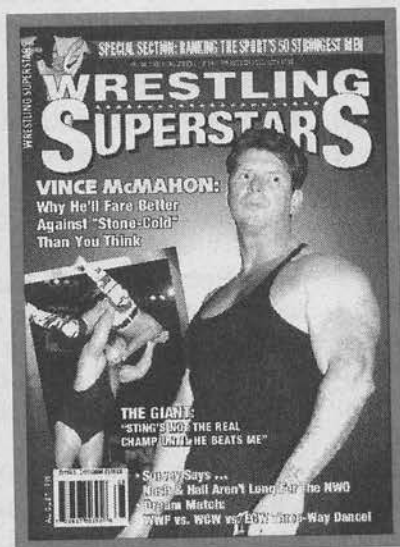
Send YOUR LETTERS to:
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Although they are on the same side now, Francine and Sunny have had their verbal battles in the past. Gary Cipola of Philadelphia would like to see *all* the women of ECW in the ring wrestling ... at the same time.

THIS Month In...

WRESTLING SUPERSTARS



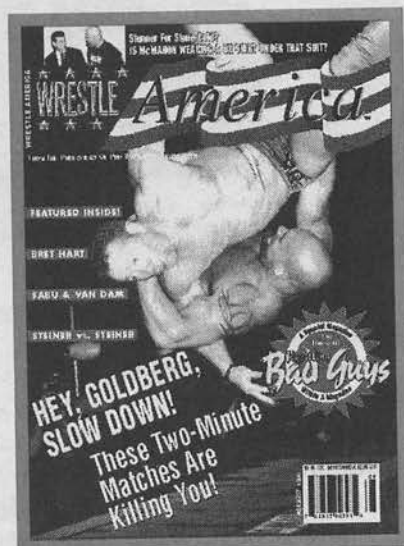
A lot of people didn't think **STEVE AUSTIN** would beat **SHAWN MICHAELS** for the WWF World title at WrestleMania XIV, but he did so convincingly. The toughest fight of "Stone-Cold's" life might be still to come.

We'll let you know why an Austin-VINCE McMAHON match won't be as one-sided as you'd think ... Who is the strongest man in wrestling? We'll not only tell you that—we'll tell you who the 50 strongest are ... **SCOTT HALL** and **KEVIN NASH** may have been the founders of the NWO, but we have reason to believe that their days in that powerful organization are numbered

All this—and much more—
in the August 1998 issue of
Wrestling Superstars

NOW ON SALE!

WRESTLE America



WCW keeps putting opponents in front of him, and **BILL GOLDBERG** keeps demolishing them. The lucky ones last beyond the two-minute mark. We think Goldberg needs to slow down. His future could depend on it! ... **STEVE AUSTIN** has "stunned" a lot of people in the WWF, but we might have a "stunner" for "Stone-Cold." Could **VINCE McMAHON** secretly be a member of **DeGENERATION X**? ... Don't miss our magazine-within-a-magazine, which features, as usual, *Wrestling Bad Guys*. This issue has a special "Bad-O-Charts" section that rates some of your favorite bad guys!

All this—and much more—
in the August 1998 issue of
Wrestle America

NOW ON SALE!

WHAT'S HAPPENING

(Continued from page 7)



Mid-South Wrestling's Family, a clique made up of Guido Buttafuoco, Steve Southern, The Boardwalk Bully, and Vito Buttafuoco, is causing a lot of trouble for Junkyard Dog and Terry Bryant.

Incidentally, on the same card, veteran **Tatsumi Fujinami** won the IWGP heavyweight title from **Ken-suke Sasaki**.

Horace Boulder, a nephew of **Hollywood Hogan**, has wrestled several matches recently in WCW—as a member of **Raven's Flock**. When I asked Hogan if that bothered him, he said, "He's a big boy. I never told him what to do in the past, and I won't do it now." No word yet on whether Boulder has been accepted as a full-fledged member of The Flock.

The Family, a group consisting of **Guido Buttafuoco**, **Steve Southern**, **The Boardwalk Bully**, and **Vito Buttafuoco**, is feuding with **Junkyard Dog** and **Terry Bryant** in Louisiana's Mid-South Wrestling. JYD and Bryant have complained to MSW officials about sneak-attacks perpetrated by The Family, who have been fined on numerous occasions. "No problem, we have lots of money," Vito noted. "The attacks will keep on comin'!"

Nick Dinsmore and **Rob Conway**, a.k.a. **Limited Edition**, are the new Music City tag team champions by virtue of their win in a four-corners match against **The Rock 'n' Roll Express**, **The Tennessee**

Volunteers, and **Ladies Night Out** ... The Ladies International Wrestling Association will hold its 13th annual convention from June 18 to 20 at Las Vegas' Plaza Hotel. **Stu Hart** will receive the organization's Founders' Award for lifetime achievement.

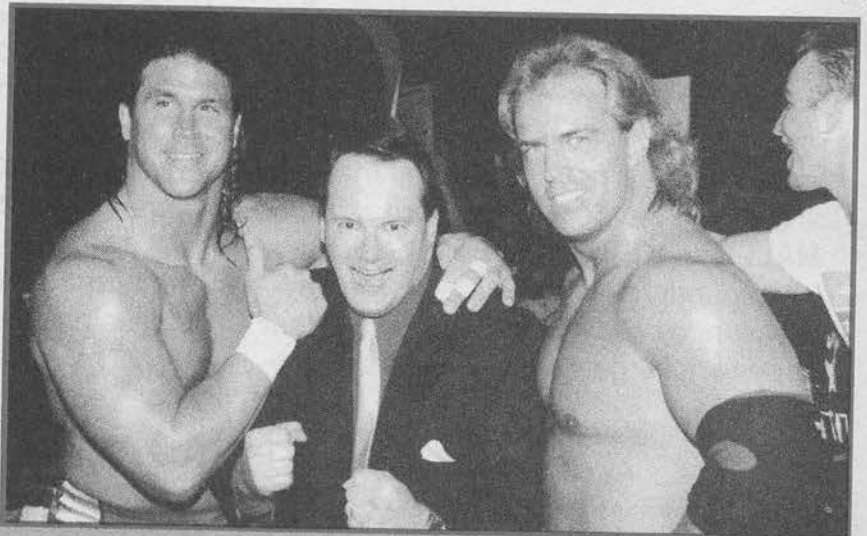
Tony Martin, who holds titles in boxing's NABF and USBA, has signed for a boxer vs. wrestler match against Grande Wrestling Alliance American heavyweight champion **Flexx Wheeler** ... The

WWF announced that its shows will no longer be seen on the DSF Free Network, which had been broadcasting the federation's programming to Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. **Vince McMahon** explained that the move is part of an effort to secure "more friendly" time slots. The shows had been aired at midnight, sometimes up to four months after they were seen in the United States.

Jim Cornette says he's delighted with the progress of his new **Midnight Express**, who defeated **The Headbangers** for the NWA tag team championship on March 30. "Everyone laughed at me when I put **Bob Holly** and **Bart Gunn** together, but now they're all singin' a different tune," Cornette boasted. "I never thought I could top those Midnight Express combinations of the past, but I have finally done it!"

Former Express member **Stan Lane** told me, "I'm glad Jim is 100 percent behind these guys, because they really need it. The truth of the matter is no team in wrestling was as good as Stan Lane and **Bobby Eaton**—the *real* Midnight Express."

That's what's happening. I'll see you at the matches! □



Jim Cornette is proud of what his new Midnight Express (Bart Gunn and Bob Holly) has accomplished in the WWF so far. Stan Lane, a member of a previous version of The Midnight Express, isn't quite as impressed.

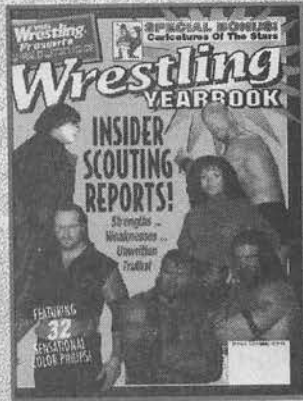
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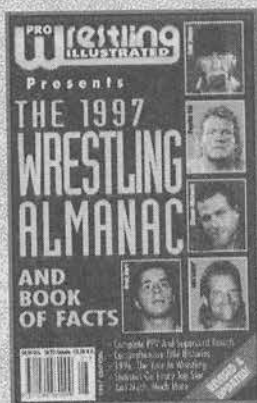
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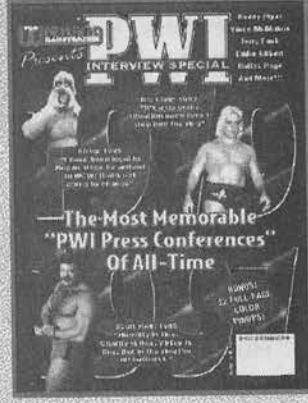
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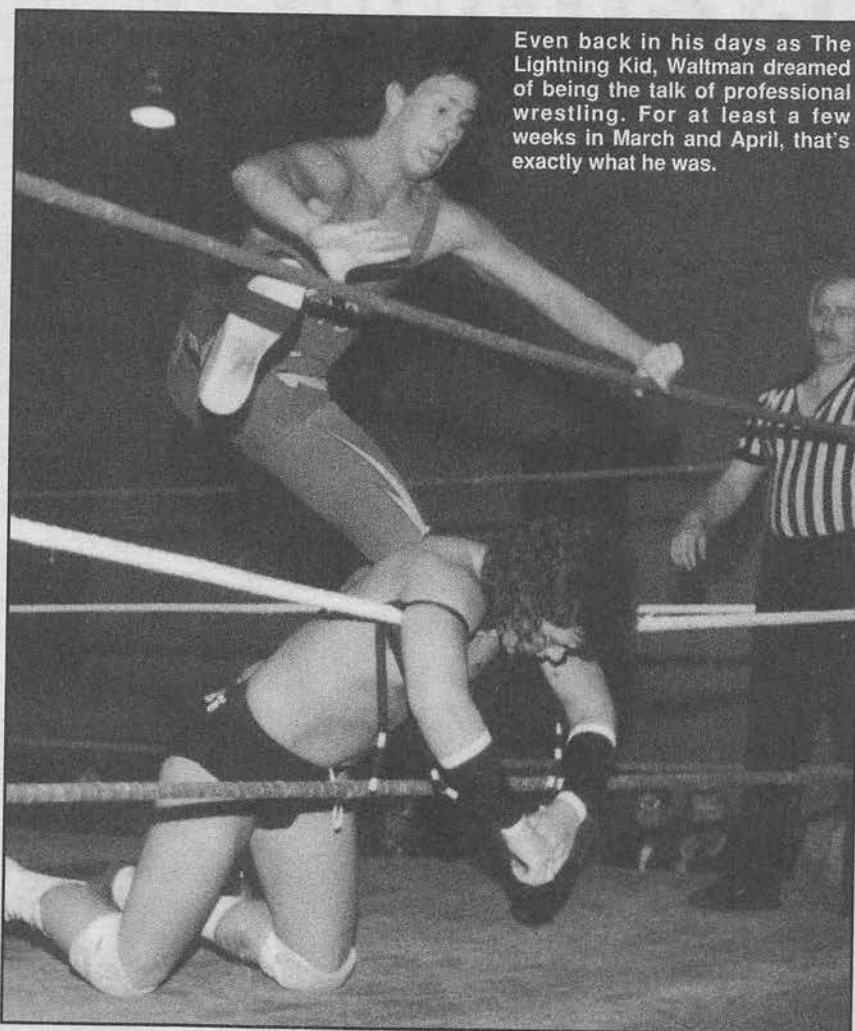
He was, however, growing and maturing as a wrestler. No longer were there titters of laughter from the crowd. Quite the opposite. Fans eagerly anticipated his appearances. And this was in spite of the fact that he was a rulebreaker. The dirtier he became, the more the crowd roared its approval. In this day and age of rulebreaker worship, he was ahead of his time. At least in Minnesota, Texas, and Japan, he was becoming the talk of professional wrestling.

Big-time opportunity finally knocked in 1993. The WWF came calling and he was off to the bright lights of Titan land. But he was starting over. A small man in a land of super heavyweights. He was considered an underdog, a man who could occasionally upset the major stars. But his success inspired many of his peers and his growing legion of fans. He was moving toward becoming the talk of professional wrestling.

In 1996, he moved on to WCW, re-uniting with his friends Scott Hall and Kevin Nash. Unfortunately for him, his jump from the WWF to WCW came only a few months after Hulk Hogan officially turned rulebreaker and formed the NWO, so it didn't have the impact he had hoped it would.

TOP 10 WAYS TO MISPRONOUNCE SEAN WALTMAN'S OLD NAME SYXX

10. Snickers
9. Styx
8. Socks the Cat
7. Saks Fifth Avenue
6. Slick
5. Schick
4. Schtick
3. Stitch
2. Shaft
1. Trademarked by WCW



Even back in his days as The Lightning Kid, Waltman dreamed of being the talk of professional wrestling. For at least a few weeks in March and April, that's exactly what he was.

On March 9 of this year, a Federal Express delivery driver knocked on the door of his Minnesota home. He answered the door, accepted the package, and opened it. In it was his termination from WCW. While most wrestlers would look at this as a low point of their career, for him, it was the start of his quest to realize a goal.

His name was all over the Internet. His picture was on the cover of *PWI Weekly*. He was the one wrestler who was on the minds of all the fans. How did he feel about his firing? Where would he go next? It was a story that played itself out for several weeks, and his name was on the tip of every wrestling fan's tongue. When he made his decision to return to

the WWF at the end of March, the 'Net intensity increased and still remains. Would he join DX? What would he call himself now?

Even though I do not speak to him as much as I once did (the rigors of both of our schedules), I still consider him a friend. We talk occasionally, reminiscing about the past and the paths that we both have taken since we first met. We have both achieved a lot of the goals we set for ourselves back then. But finally, the one thing that was most important to him for so long has become reality, and I know how thrilled he is about that.

Sean Waltman (a.k.a. The Lightning Kid, The 1-2-3 Kid, Syxx, and now X-Pac) is the talk of professional wrestling. □

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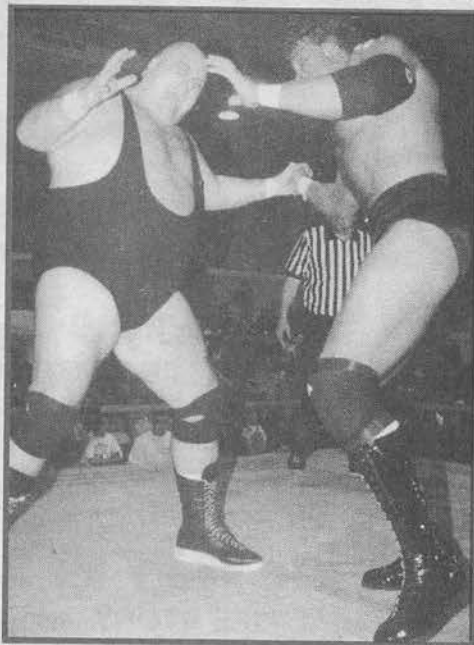
(Continued from page 14)

Mobile, AL (Correspondent—Frank Miller): WCW World champ Sting got a decisive pinfall victory over NWO member Scott Hall at the Uncensored pay-per-view, solidifying his grasp on the belt.

The "Stinger" dominated the early part of the match, sending Hall reeling with several punches. One time he hit him hard enough to knock him into the ropes, where he got tangled up. Dusty Rhodes tried to help untangle his charge, but he accidentally sent Hall head-first to the arena floor. While outside the ring, Sting went after Dusty, but Hall stopped that effort by attacking him from behind.

Later, as Hall had Sting dazed, Dusty again got involved, this time by landing an elbowdrop. Hall covered the champion for a pinfall attempt, but Sting kicked out. This marked the beginning of Sting's rally. He was barely fazed by Hall's subsequent punches and soon maneuvered him into the Scorpion deathlock. Dusty then jumped onto the apron and started yelling at Sting, who released the hold. Dusty then pushed referee Mark Curtis into Hall. With Curtis down, Dusty tossed brass knuckles to Hall, who used them to knock out Sting. By the time Curtis regained his senses, though, Sting was able to kick out. Hall then picked up Sting to execute an "Outsider's Edge," but Sting dropped down behind him and executed a Scorpion death-drop instead. Sting then covered Hall for the victory.

In other bouts: WCW TV champ Booker T beat Eddy Guerrero ... Juventud Guerrera defeated Konnan ... WCW cruiserweight champ Chris Jericho defeated Dean Malenko ... Lex Luger beat Scott Steiner ... WCW U.S. champion "Diamond" Dallas Page beat Raven and Chris Benoit in a triple jeopardy match ... The Giant beat Kevin Nash by disqualification ... Bret Hart defeated Curt Hennig ...



King Kong Bundy and Sid Vicious engage in a test of strength. Bundy beat the two-time former WWF World champ by DQ at a NEW card, though the decision hardly seemed fair.

Hollywood Hogan wrestled Randy Savage to a no-contest.

Thomaston, CT (Correspondent—Timothy A. Walker): The main event of this North East Wrestling card pitted two-time former WWF World champion "Psycho" Sid Vicious against a man who came close to winning that belt numerous times, King Kong Bundy. Vicious was seconded by the beautiful Amy, while Bundy was managed by Mike Mercedes. Both managers would play a big role in this hard-hitting match.

The 446-pound Bundy used his size to maximum advantage early. Sid tried to bodyslam him at the outset, but Bundy simply shifted his weight and fell on top of Sid, who barely avoided being pinned. Bundy proceeded to wear down Sid with a chinlock. Each time Sid tried to power his way out, Mercedes would distract the referee, allowing Bundy an opportunity to yank Vicious back down to the mat by the hair. Finally, Sid got back to his feet and rammed his elbow into

Bundy's stomach. That allowed Sid to break free from Bundy's grip, but after Sid came off the ropes, Bundy caught him with a knee to the stomach and Sid doubled over in pain.

Vicious proved his mettle by starting another comeback. He nailed Bundy with a hard clothesline, then surprised him with a bodyslam. Just when it looked like Sid was about to put Bundy away, Mercedes got involved again. As Mercedes held Sid on the ropes, Bundy charged toward his opponent, but Sid managed to move out of the way. Bundy then collided with his manager, who fell to the floor. Sid quickly rolled up Bundy from behind, but Bundy kicked out just before the referee could make a three-count. Sid continued to dominate until Amy turned against him and throwing her loaded purse to Bundy.

Sid was able to wrestle it away from Bundy and use it on him, but unfortunately for him, the referee, who had been distracted by Mercedes while all this was going on, saw Sid with the purse and called for the bell. Bundy was declared the winner by disqualification.

In other matches: Tony DeVito pinned John Diamond in a street-fight to win the NEW TV title ... Primo Carnera III won a battle royal ... NEW light heavyweight champ Johnny Handsome pinned Ray Odyssey ... Half Nelson beat Tiny the Terrible ... Johnny Rotten pinned Michael Caine ... Jake Roberts pinned Mr. Grim ... Primo Carnera III defeated Thorn & Danger Man in a handicap match ... Terrence W. Sledge, Ralph Mosca, & Rican Havoc beat H.C. Loc, Latin Lover, & J.L. Storm. □

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YOU ASKED US

(Continued from page 16)

much attention she gets by the number of zeros in her paycheck. Chyna knows she is a key part of DeGeneration X without me having to remind her every five minutes. In case you haven't noticed by now, Chyna is different than most women—she doesn't need to be coddled. I don't have to tell her how much she means to us. Chyna is neither weak nor stupid, and if she wasn't treated fairly in DX, I'm sure she wouldn't hesitate to go work for somebody else. But that won't happen."

...

Q: "This question is for Bill Goldberg: Mr. Goldberg, are you getting frustrated by the obvious lack of competition for you in WCW at this point of your career? Do you think it's time that the promoters step you up to stiffer competition like Booker T or Buff Bagwell?"—Mark Rihmes, Binghamton, NY

A: "Stiffer competition like who?" Goldberg responded. "Listen, I don't care who they put in front of me. They all go down just as fast. I just want my shot at a title, that's all. You can line 'em up from now to forever and I'll beat 'em all. It doesn't matter who it is. If it's somebody from Raven's Flock, somebody from the NWO, or somebody from Japan, I'll beat 'em! I haven't lost yet, have I? Then I guess I'm not frustrated yet."

...

Q: "This question is for ECW heavy-weight champion Shane Douglas: Shane, I'm a huge fan of yours, but I cannot help but be alarmed by how easily you have forgiven Bam Bam Bigelow. The man is a walking turnstile, and he's



The on-again, off-again friendship between Triple Threat members Shane Douglas and Bam Bam Bigelow sure keeps ECW fans entertained. Douglas is happy to have Bam Bam back on his side.

already burned you once. How could you welcome him back to The Triple Threat so easily?"—Jennifer Joyce, Boston, MA

A: "That's an easy one, Jennifer," "The Franchise" boasted. "What most of the ECW fans fail to realize is that Bam Bam Bigelow is one of the smartest people in this business. He left The Triple Threat for a while, but he very quickly realized that The Triple Threat is the strength of ECW, so we worked out a deal for him to return. Now we're ruling like we've never ruled before. I got my belt back, and Bam Bam beat that sucker Taz for the TV title. Now my elbow is healed, Bam Bam is kicking butt, and Chris Candido is one-half—make that nine-tenths—of the ECW tag team championship team. I believe that makes us the most powerful organization in professional wrestling today. And we are also the smartest, Jennifer." □

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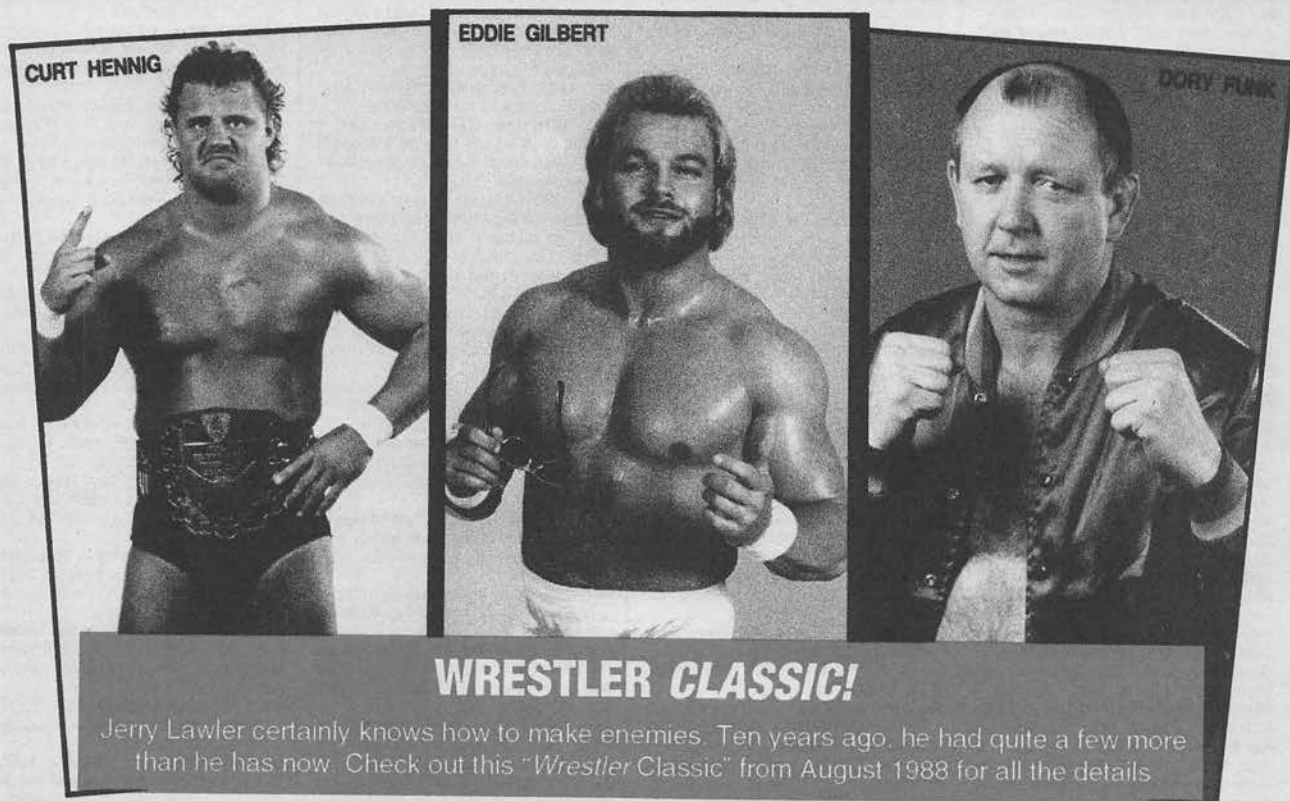
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When Eddie Gilbert placed a \$25,000 bounty on the head of Jerry Lawler, the bounty hunters who invaded Memphis all had a piece of surprising news: They were ready, willing, and able to cripple Lawler—free of charge!



Keep Your Money, Gilbert!

"WE'LL DESTROY JERRY LAWLER FOR FUN!"

TWENTY-FIVE THOUSAND dollars is a lot of money. For that amount of cash, men have lied, cheated, embezzled, and even killed. For \$25,000, brothers have deceived brothers, husbands have

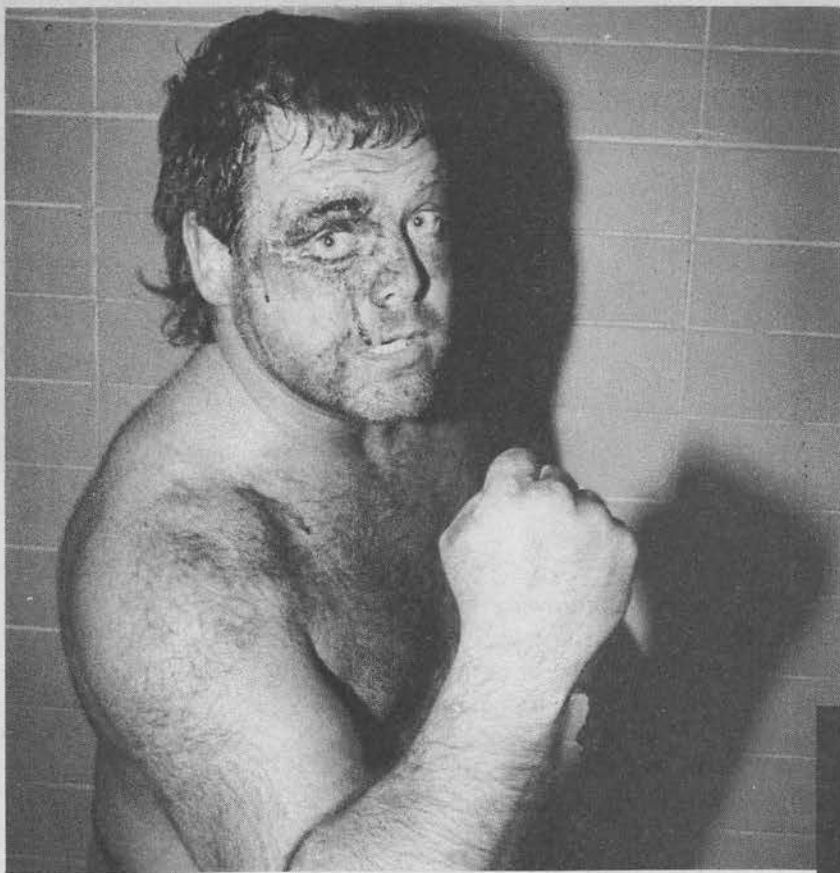
abandoned wives, and leaders have betrayed followers. People of unwavering morality have been driven to do the most atrocious deeds.

All for \$25,000.

It was hardly surprising, there-

fore, that wrestler after wrestler lined up to accept Eddie Gilbert's recent \$25,000 offer to cripple Jerry Lawler. The real surprise came later.

Nobody wanted the money.



Whatever happened to good, honest greed? Whatever happened to the days when a \$25,000 bounty could get even longtime friends to battle each other? Obviously for Gilbert and his loyal friends, greed is a thing of the past, having been completely obscured by an intense shared hatred for Jerry Lawler.

They'll put "The King" out of wrestling just for the fun of it.

Curt Hennig was the first to come forward, accept the challenge, and scorn the paycheck. "I don't need Gilbert's money," Hennig said, his face brimming with anger. "Lawler's a no-good punk whose mere presence in a ring causes me to become extremely violent."

"And violence toward Lawler," he said, cracking an evil smile, "is not something I like to keep locked up inside!"

Although no long-standing feud exists between the two, Hennig still harbors intense resentment toward Lawler—a determined challenger to the AWA throne—and his claims of

Jerry Lawler (above), enraged by Eddie Gilbert, has had to fight off a new challenge from Dory Funk, who catches him in a toehold (below). Lawler retaliates with a fireball (right).



royalty. Even without a title around his waist, Lawler refers to himself as "The King," a title that Hennig feels unnecessarily cheapens wrestling.

"I'll show that beltless bum what a *real* champ can do," Hennig continued. "I've got the title, not him. If *anyone* is 'The King,' it's me!"

By the time this issue went to press, however, Hennig had not succeeded in crippling his opponent. One match with Lawler ended in mayhem as Gilbert and CWF newcomer Scotty "The Body" rushed into the ring to attack Lawler. Gilbert succeeded in knocking out Lawler with chloroform, but "The King" soon returned to the ring.

The next bounty hunter was



Scotty "The Body." In accepting Gilbert's challenge, he also rejected the promise of financial reward, opting instead for something a little more interesting: a date with Missy Hyatt. Unfortunately for Scotty, Lawler outclassed him and won the match easily. "The Body" left the ring with bruises from both Lawler and Hyatt—Missy didn't like what she'd seen and took the opportunity to deliver a slap in the face to Gilbert's would-be avenger. The date was off. Another challenger would have to be found.

Loyalty can be a very tenuous thing in the world of wrestling, where alliances are as unpredictable as the stock market. Dory Funk Jr. knows about loyalty. The latest wrestler to come forward for Gilbert, Funk *also* claims that he will not accept his friend's check, and insists that he is going after Lawler out of friendship for the Gilbert family.

Fireworks between Funk and Lawler exploded even before their match. During a bout between Tommy Gilbert and Eddie Marlin, the lines of loyalty were clearly drawn between the two camps. Funk rushed the ring to defend Gilbert, just as did Lawler for Marlin.

But that was only the beginning.

In their own match, Funk and Lawler battled to the limits of aggression; indeed, they were wrestling not only for themselves, but for their volatile supporters as well. The match finally ended when



Hennig leglocks Lawler (top) and shoves a chair against his throat (above).

Lawler succeeded in throwing fire and burning Funk in the face.

"That's exactly the type of tactics Eddie, Curt, and I were trying to eliminate—then he goes and does it again!" Funk howled after the match, his face covered with medicated bandages. "I'll be back. The money's not even a factor. Lawler's gonna pay—in blood and flesh!"

Whatever Funk's rationale, the fact remains that Lawler has a locker room full of enemies for whom the mere mention of "The King" precipitates the most violent reactions. So violent, in fact, that personal gain is forgotten.

They just want to destroy Jerry Lawler.

Lawler, characteristically, is uninterested in these attempts to put him out of the game. Perhaps he's just seen it all too many times before.

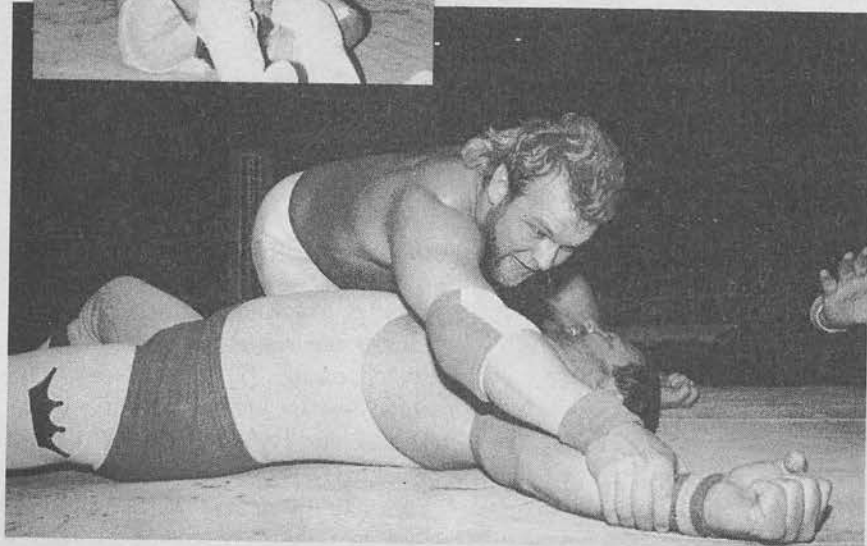
"\$25,000 ... \$50,000 ... \$100,000. It doesn't matter much to me. Gilbert can offer *any* amount of money. He'll never get *anyone* who can beat me!" Lawler boasted.

But, Jerry, none of them are doing it for the money. How do you feel about that?

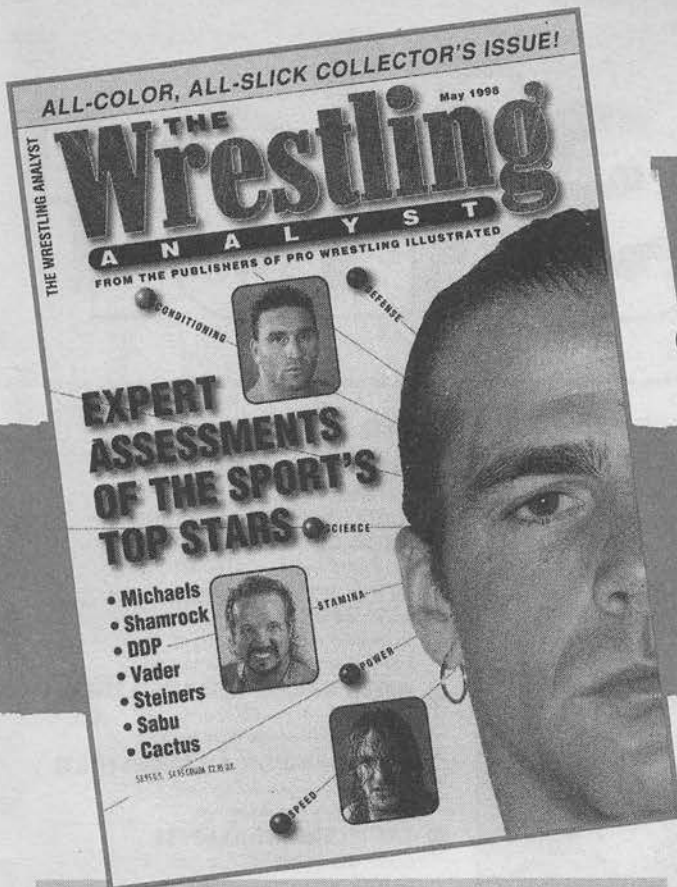
"I don't care *why* they're doing it," Lawler said, "but I know one thing: Gilbert's throwing these bums at me because he's afraid of getting in the ring himself. I think if anyone should pick up his challenge it should be him!"

At this point, however, Eddie Gilbert may have to stand in line before getting another shot at Jerry Lawler. There's a united front of wrestlers in Memphis who are eager to cripple Lawler themselves.

Just for fun. □



Gilbert piledrives Lawler (top) and goes for the cover (above). So far, Gilbert has been unable to end "The King's" reign, but he'll keep on trying.



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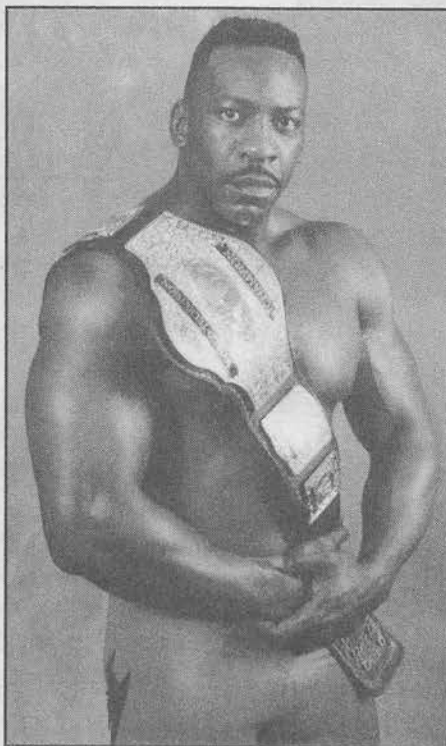
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Wrestler

TOP 10

- 1 STEVE AUSTIN**
252, Victoria, TX
(2) WWF World champion
- 2 STING**
260, Venice Beach, CA
(1) WCW World champion
- 3 DIAMOND DALLAS PAGE**
260, Tampa, FL
(3) U.S. heavyweight champion
- 4 ROCKY MAIVIA**
272, Pearl City, HI
(8) WWF Intercontinental champion
- 5 MITSU HARU MISAWA**
228, Ashikaga, Japan
(-) Triple Crown Champion
- 6 THE UNDERTAKER**
328, parts unknown
(6) No. 2 contender: WWF World title
- 7 BOOKER T**
250, Harlem, NY
(3) WCW TV champion
- 8 HUNTER HEARST HELMSLEY**
279, Greenwich, CT
(-) WWF European champion
- 9 ROB VAN DAM**
240, Battle Creek, MI
(-) ECW TV champion
- 10 TATSUMI FUJINAMI**
234, Oita, Japan
(-) IWGP heavyweight champion



Booker T

TAG TEAMS

- 1 BILLY GUNN & JESSE JAMES**
Combined weight: 496 pounds
(1) WWF World tag team champions
- 2 MASA CHONO & KEIJI MUTO**
Combined weight: 480 pounds
(3) IWGP tag team champions
- 3 LOD 2000**
Combined weight: 560 pounds
(-) No. 1 contenders: WWF tag title
- 4 OWEN HART & KEN SHAMROCK**
Combined weight: 462 pounds
(-) No. 2 contenders: WWF tag title
- 5 CHRIS CANDIDO & LANCE STORM**
Combined weight: 457 pounds
(-) ECW tag team champions
- 6 THE MIDNIGHT EXPRESS**
Combined weight: 487 pounds
(-) NWA tag team champions
- 7 AXL ROTTEN & MAHONEY**
Combined weight: 663 pounds
(-) No. 1 contenders: ECW tag title
- 8 THE HEADBANGERS**
Combined weight: 488 pounds
(8) No. 1 contenders: NWA tag title
- 9 SABU & ROB VAN DAM**
Combined weight: 447 pounds
(5) No. 2 contenders: ECW tag title
- 10 TERRY FUNK & 2 COLD SCORPIO**
Combined weight: 469 pounds
(-) No. 3 contenders: WWF tag title

WCW

World Champion:

STING

(C) 260, Venice Beach, CA

1—DIAMOND DALLAS PAGE

(1) 260, Tampa, FL

2—BOOKER T

(3) 250, Harlem, NY

3—HULK HOGAN

(2) 275, Venice Beach, CA

4—CHRIS JERICHO

(4) 225, Vancouver, B. C.

5—BILL GOLDBERG

(9) 270, Tulsa, OK

6—LEX LUGER

(8) 265, Chicago, IL

7—RICK STEINER

(-) 248, Detroit, MI

8—KEVIN NASH

(-) 356, Detroit, MI

9—THE GIANT

(-) 430, parts unknown

10—CHRIS BENOIT

(10) 218, Edmonton, Alberta

WWF

World Champion:

STEVE AUSTIN

(2) 241, Dallas, TX

1—ROCKY MAIVIA

(1) 272, Pearl City, HI

2—THE UNDERTAKER

(3) 328, parts unknown

3—HUNTER HEARST HELMSLEY

(6) 279, Greenwich, CT

4—KEN SHAMROCK

(4) 235, San Bernardino, CA

5—KANE

(5) 345, parts unknown

6—JEFF JARRETT

(-) 230, Nashville, TN

7—GOLDUST

(-) 254, Austin, TX

8—OWEN HART

(-) 227, Calgary, Alberta

9—BRADSHAW

(-) 309, Roscoe, TX

10—MARC MERO

(9) 235, Buffalo, NY

NWA

NWA Champion:

DAN SEVERN

(C) 265, Detroit, MI

1—BARRY WINDHAM

(2) 273, Sweetwater, TX

2—DOUG GILBERT

(4) 241, Lexington, TN

3—SID VICIOUS

(-) 318, West Memphis, AR

4—COLORADO KID

(-) 231, Denver, CO

5—LANCE DIAMOND

(-) 230, Richmond, VA

6—RIP ROGERS

(-) 239, Cleveland, OH

7—ERICH SBRACCIA

(7) 225, Boston MA

8—QUINN MAGNUM

(-) 223, Connellsville, PA

9—BRIAN JEWEL

(-) 235, Winnipeg, Manitoba

10—DEVON STORM

(3) 232, Pacific Palisades, CA

ECW

ECW Champion:

SHANE DOUGLAS

(C) 240, Pittsburgh, PA

1—ROB VAN DAM

(10) 240, Battle Creek, MI

2—BAM BAM BIGELOW

(1) 368, Mt. Laurel, NJ

3—AL SNOW

(6) 232, Lima, OH

4—SPIKE DUDLEY

(-) 155, parts unknown

5—SABU

(4) 225, Bombay

6—TOMMY DREAMER

(2) 245, Yonkers, NY

7—THE SANDMAN

(3) 244, Philadelphia, PA

8—2 COLD SCORPIO

(9) 222, Denver, CO

9—DOUG FURNAS

(5) 243, Commerce, OK

10—LANCE STORM

(-) 234, Calgary, Alberta

OFFICIAL RATINGS

Top 10 and Tag Team ratings are based on won-lost records for the past month, quality of opposition, and inherent skill of each wrestler or team. These ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board.

All other ratings are based on the official current positions of challengers to the top title in each category; certain titleholders receive an automatic spot in the ratings. The number in parentheses indicates a wrestler's position in that category last issue; (-) indicates that the wrestler was not rated in that category last issue while (C) indicates the wrestler was champion in that category last issue.

For period ended April 17, 1998

ALL-PRO WRESTLING: Champion—Robert Thompson; 1—Michael Modest; 2—Erin O' Grady; 3—Vic Grimes; 4—Tony Jones; 5—Donovan Morgan; 6—Maxx Justice; 7—Frank Murdoch; 8—Jay Smooth; 9—Chris Cole; 10—Rick Turner

AAA: Champion—Perro Aguayo; 1—Abismo Negro; 2—Octagon; 3—Pentagon; 4—Fuerza Guerrera; 5—Heavy Metal; 6—Sangre Chicana; 7—Cibernetico; 8—Perro Aguayo Jr.; 9—El Corbade Jr.; 10—Latin Lover.

CENTURY WRESTLING ALLIANCE: Champion—Erich Sbraccia; 1—Tony Rumble; 2—Vic Steamboat; 3—Knuckles Nelson; 4—Abdullah The Butcher; 5—Ace Darling; 6—Tony Atlas; 7—El Mascarado; 8—Joel Davis; 9—Devon Storm; 10—Pink Assassin.

FLORIDA CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING: Champion—Joe DeFuria; 1—Vampire Warrior; 2—Hack Myers; 3—Scoot Andrews; 4—Billy Viper; 5—Snot Dudley; 6—El Fidelista; 7—Bobby Rogers; 8—Flex Armstrong; 9—Bill Payne; 10—Blair Rogers.

GRANDE WRESTLING ALLIANCE: Champion—George Steele; 1—Flexx Wheeler; 2—Bob Steele; 3—Mandingo Warrior; 4—Alexi Taktarov; 5—Jake Lawless; 6—Rolling Thunder; 7—Ron Starr; 8—Middknight; 9—Danny Rhodes; 10—George Love.

MUSIC CITY WRESTLING: Champion—Colorado Kid; 1—Wolfie D; 2—Flash Flanagan; 3—Jamie Dundee; 4—Chris Michaels; 5—Shane Eden; 6—Nick Dinsmore; 7—Brickhouse Brown; 8—Reno Riggins; 9—Kenny Arden; 10—Trailer Park Trash.

NEW DIMENSION WRESTLING: Champion—Madd Maxx; 1—Rick Morton; 2—Bobby Fulton; 3—Jackie Fulton; 4—Rick Link; 5—Pez Whalley; 6—Rikki Nelson; 7—Surge; 8—Dale Porter; 9—Venom; 10—Willow The Wisp.

POWER PRO WRESTLING: Champion—Title vacant; 1—Jerry Lawler; 2—Buddy Landell; 3—Austin Idol; 4—Bill Dundee; 5—Brian Christopher; 6—Spellbinder; 7—Bobby Bronze; 8—Lance Jade; 9—Tracey Smothers; 10—Mo.

PENNSYLVANIA CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING: Champion—Tiger Khan; 1—Mr. Ooh La La; 2—Reckless Youth; 3—Cheetah Master; 4—Lance Diamond; 5—Julio Sanchez; 6—Glen Osbourne; 7—John Rock; 8—Mike Quackenbush; 9—Boogie Woogie Brown; 10—Kodiak Bear.

PRO WRESTLING FEDERATION: Champion—Black Angel; 1—Ripper; 2—George South; 3—Italian Stallion; 4—The Breeze; 5—The Bodyguard; 6—Scotty Hotbody; 7—Scott Powers; 8—Super Ninja; 9—American G.I.; 10—Texas Outlaw.

TOP ROPE PRODUCTIONS: Champion—Hungarian Barbarian; 1—Bam Bam Bigelow; 2—King Kong Bundy; 3—Jimmy Snuka; 4—The Sultan; 5—Doink; 6—Samu; 7—Jay Love; 8—Nick Maddox; 9—Perfect Creation; 10—Little Running Bear.

WORLD WRESTING COUNCIL: Champion—Ray Gonzalez; 1—Fidel Sierra; 2—Solitario; 3—Carlos Colon; 4—Atkie Mulumbia; 5—Ricky Santana; 6—Shane 7—Invader I 8—Mohammad Hussein; 9—Rico Sauve; 10—Victor the Bodyguard.

NEW JAPAN

IWGP Champion:

TATSUMI FUJINAMI

(-) 234, Oita, Japan

1—KENSUKE SASAKI

(C) 233, Tokyo, Japan

2—SHINYA HASHIMOTO

(1) 287, Gifu, Japan

3—KEIJI MUTO

(3) 245, Yamanashi, Japan

4—MASA CHONO

(2) 235, Tokyo, Japan

5—JUSHIN LIGER

(8) 206, Hiroshima, Japan

6—HIROYOSHI TENZAN

(4) 270, Tokyo, Japan

7—NAOYA OGAWA

(7) 286, Tokyo, Japan

8—DON FRYE

(-) 235, Sierra Vista, AZ

9—OSAMU NISHIMURA

(-) 225, Tokyo, Japan

10—SATOSHI KOJIMA

(-) 223, Tokyo, Japan

ALL-JAPAN

Triple Crown Champion:

MITSU HARU MISAWA

(C) 228, Ashikaga, Japan

1—TOSHI AKI KAWADA

(2) 245, Ashikaga, Japan

2—JUN AKIYAMA

(5) 230, Hiroshima, Japan

3—KENTA KOBASHI

(1) 261, Fukuchiyama, Japan

4—STAN HANSEN

(6) 322, Borger, TX

5—AKIRA TAUE

(4) 265, Chichibu, Japan

6—STEVE WILLIAMS

(7) 265, Norman, OK

7—JOHNNY ACE

(3) 250, San Bernardino, CA

8—GARY ALBRIGHT

(10) 343, Billings, MT

9—TAKAO OMORI

(-) 221, Tokyo, Japan

10—MAUNUKEA MOSSMAN

(9) 245, Honolulu, HI

EMLL

EMLL Champion:

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(C) 215, parts unknown

1—ATLANTIS

(1) 180, Guadalajara, Mexico

2—EL HIJO DEL SANTO

(2) 180, Tulancingo, Mexico

3—RAYO DE JALISCO JR.

(10) 270, Guadalajara, Mexico

4—EMILIO CHARLES JR.

(4) 222, Mexico City, Mexico

5—ULTIMO DRAGON

(5) 175, Mexico City, Mexico

6—NEGRO CASAS

(6) 175, Mexico City, Mexico

7—CIEN CARAS

(-) 235, Lagos de Moreno, Mexico

8—FELINO

(8) 165, Mexico City, Mexico

9—BLACK WARRIOR

(9) 221, Mexico City, Mexico

10—BLUE PANTHER

(7) 215, Mexico City, Mexico

PROMO AZTECA

Promo Azteca Champion:

KONNAN

(C) 237, Mexico City, Mexico

1—PIERROTH JR.

(1) 251, Cuernavaca, Mexico

2—TARZAN BOY

(6) Monterey, Mexico

3—JUVENTUD GUERRERA

(5) 165, Mexico City, Mexico

4—BLACK MAGIC

(3) 238, London, England

5—LIZMARK JR.

(7) 249, Acapulco, Mexico

6—PIRATA MORGAN

(-) 221, Mexico City, Mexico

7—SILVER KING

(2) 215, Mexico City, Mexico

8—MASCARA SAGRADA

(9) 249, Veracruz, Mexico

9—EL HIJO DEL DIABLO

(-) 231, Mexico City, Mexico

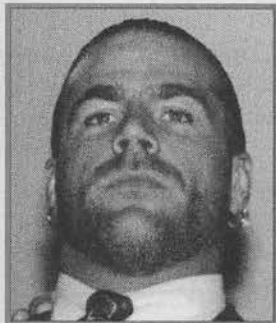
10—TINIEBLAS JR.

(8) 256, Monteclova, Mexico

Ratings

ANALYSIS

Shawn's shaky future. WrestleMania XIV was not a pay-per-view to remember for **Shawn Michaels**. Sure, he did wrestle a courageous match, and he was in the main event, but he clearly was not at his best. Remember, he suffered two herniated disks in his back while training in February, and we later found out that he had reinjured the back during his intense match with "**Stone-Cold**" **Steve Austin**.



Shawn Michaels

Yet he came close to winning anyway. That says a lot about "The Heartbreak Kid's" athletic skills and his desire to win at all costs. Unfortunately, we probably won't be seeing much of Shawn Michaels in the ring for a while. Even though the official ratings for this magazine were compiled only a few weeks after WrestleMania, you won't find Michaels' name anywhere in the Top 10 or in the WWF rankings, and you might not be able to do so for many issues to come. There is some speculation that the back injury will keep him out for nine or 10 months.

Say what you will about Michaels' personality and attitude, but it's hard to argue that when he's at his best, Shawn isn't one of the best wrestlers in the world. The WWF will miss him.

Savage has problems, too. The injury bug struck at arguably the worst possible time for "**Macho Man**" **Randy Savage**. He was scheduled to get a title match against WCW World champion **Sting** at the Spring Stampede pay-per-view, and there were many who believed that he stood an excellent chance of wresting control of the NWO away from his arch-rival, **Hollywood Hogan**. But during an impromptu match with **Sting** on March 31, he tore the anterior cruciate ligament in his right knee.

Many people close to Savage initially feared that his injury might keep him out for six months or more. His cause wasn't helped at all when several members of the NWO attacked him at *Nitro* just six days later. He suffered some neck injuries in that attack, so you can understand why there's no Savage anywhere in this month's ratings, either.

He may not really be "Mr. Monday Night," but ... Rob Van Dam earns a spot in the Top 10 this

issue by virtue of his victory over **Bam Bam Bigelow** for the ECW TV title on April 4 in Buffalo, New York. He needed quite a bit of help from his good friend **Sabu** to get the win over the "Beast From The East," but we must say that it's about time Van Dam, clearly one of the best all-around wrestlers in ECW, won a title—any title—in his home federation. He's always bragging about how great he is and how much the WWF wants him. Now he finally has a gold belt to his credit. Then again, maybe this win will make him more arrogant than ever.



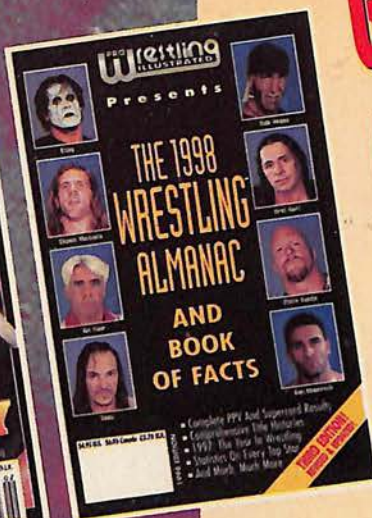
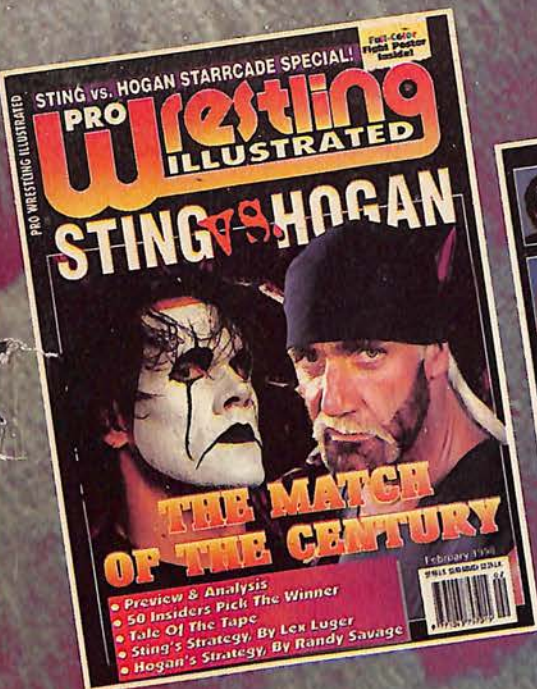
Rob Van Dam

This 'n' that ... You've probably noticed that we are now featuring ratings from more independent federations than ever. This was in response to all the letters we received asking us for more coverage of the smaller promotions. You asked for it, so you got it! We'll print the ratings from as many different federations as we can in each issue.

It's not meant to be a slight against the NWO, but **Scott Hall** and **Kevin Nash**, the reigning WCW World tag team champions, don't make the tag team ratings this issue because, simply, they haven't been defending their title at all of late. In fact, it almost seems as if that title has been forgotten.

Nash has been keeping busy bickering with **Hollywood Hogan**, while Hall was missing in action again in late-March and early-April, so it's tough to try to predict what the future of that title is. Will Hall and Nash be pressured to defend the belts more? Will WCW threaten to strip them of the title? Or will things remain status quo, with the tag team division in WCW continuing to be de-emphasized? We shall see soon. □

That's all for this issue. As always, if you have any questions or comments relating to any of the issues we've raised on this page or in our ratings section, we definitely want to hear from you. Write to us at: "Ratings Analysis," c/o THE WRESTLER, Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034.



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